

KURO NO HIERA-GLAPHICOS

Colours the world, in this Fantasy Action

修復上

魔術者

黒鋼の

嬉

野

秋

彦

URESHINO
AKIHIKO

illust. ミュキルリア

くろの
ヒエラ?
グラフィコス

ファミ通文庫

「ちよつとこれ、
透けすぎじゃない?」

ヴァレリア・コスタクルタ
Valeria Costacurta



黒鋼の
くろのヒエラ・グラフィコス
魔紋修復士
KURO NO HIERA-GLAPHICOS



「よろしくお願ひします、
コスタクルタ猊下」

オルヴィエト・リヒテルナッハ
Orvieto Richternach

「この子にきょうからあなた専属の
紋章官をやってもらうわ」

ディミタール・リヒテルナッハ
Dimitar Richternach

「えええ!?」

「とにかくさ——しつかり調べてきてもらおうよ。
しかるべき人間に」



ジェフレン・イサーク・フォルティア
Jeffren Isaac Fortia



ベッチーナ・アルビオール
Bettina Albiol

キケ・アルビオール
Quique Albiol

「神巫の力がどんなん
見せてあげるものが、

剥き出しになつた
デコルテのあたりから、
複雑な光のラインが
両肩を通つて
指先へと流れしていく。
右腕と左腕に別々の
魔紋が浮かび上がり、
そこを走る赤いラインが、
白い肌を一気に
おおい尽くしていつた。



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Prologue - Red Dawn

A former God possessed that power and sealed the “**Demon** (*Furigana: Marouudo*)”.

People supported the works of that God, and even after He fell into slumber, the guarding of the ancient tomb that sealed the “**Demon**” became their role nowadays.

The name of that God wasn’t passed down in the current society. Even if it was passed down, people mustn’t speak of that name lightly.

Hence, people called the God “Redountra”—a sound that signified “**Lord of Redemption**”. It was for that reason that the doctrines of the people who revered Redountra took on the name of “God Redountra’s Faith”.

Thus, the tomb which sealed the former “**Demon**” was now renamed to “**Hill of Seal**”, and existed in the suburb of Amaddo Kingdom’s Holy City, Roma.



Dominas were the wives of Redountra and at the same time, special magic warriors who were chosen to perform a new seal in place of the God when the “**Demon**” showed signs of waking up in the worst case.

Red.

It was red; the flames licked everything entirely while burning them to nothingness.

The bed which he lay down on and got up from daily, the sofa that he loved to jump about on very much, and also the table where he

was unwillingly made to study reading and writing on—.

All of the memories which made up every frames of the boy's short life was engulfed and disintegrated by the bright red fire.

Rejecting such a sparkling and repulsive redness, the boy's eyes stared fixedly at his mother.

He stared at his mother who was now trying to strangle him while wondering why she was doing such a thing.

The young boy didn't understand why she had to kill him.

However, the boy vaguely felt that heat was slowly being deprived from his body.

Everything in the surrounding was engulfed by the flames; contrary to being burnt, the boy was approaching towards a cold death step by step.

At that moment, he met the eyes of his weeping mother.

The boy also didn't understand why his mother was crying.

Were they tears from having to kill her child with her own hands, or was there an even more separate circumstance?

Either way, there couldn't be an appropriate reason for a parent to kill her young child.

—When he thought so, he suddenly realised.

This wasn't reality, but a dream.



Dripping with sweat, Dimitar woke up and took a deep breath greatly.

The stars were still twinkling in the sky that could be seen from the

window. There was still time until daybreak.

Dimitar, who had brushed his nape for no particular reason, combed his dark grey hair upwards, applied a force lightly and got off the bed.

Picking up the gigantic sword that was leaning against the rear of the bed and its scabbard, he went out to the inn's back yard.

The night wind that blew slightly felt good on his sweaty body.

He wouldn't be able to fall asleep immediately anyway after having such a dream. It was far more constructive to move his body until he got tired and be attacked by sleepiness naturally.

In the end, even though he ended up practising the sword until morning just like that, it was still fine for Dimitar.

It was because the present Dimitar no longer had a mother to tell him to go to bed early every night.

Chapter 01 - Her Eminence

The holy capital of Amaddo, Roma, was protected by four layers of castle walls.

At the innermost part were the royal castle with its rampart, and also important facilities such as the magic academy, the army's military drill site, workshops and food warehouses.

On its outside, nobles' stone mansions were concentrated within the second wall. They were supposedly arranged to function as fortifications to defend the royal castle during emergencies.

And now, an old wall ran on that outer side, enclosing the old town.

Although this was the town's outermost perimeter until approximately two hundred years ago, due to the development afterwards and the population increase, a new town area was formed at the wall's outskirts. A fourth wall was then completed, enclosing this new town area altogether.



There were about four hundred thousand people residing in this castle town—to say nothing of Amaddo, there was no other town that had a scale and population of this much even if one looked over the whole continent.

Valeria groaned.

She groaned with a deep wrinkle etched onto her forehead.

Occasionally, she groaned to the extent that a small wrinkle grew on the tip of her nose.

However, to look lovely even when she made such an expression

could be said to be the effect of her appearance that she had inherited from her deceased mother. Valeria Costacurta's mother was extolled as the owner of the most beautiful face in the kingdom while she was alive.

Such a Valeria, whose skin was exposed while in her undergarment, was looking intently at the torso of a resplendent tabard with a serious countenance since some time ago.

「...Um, Ojou-sama...?」

Perhaps she was unable to withstand the long silence, the mansion's maid timidly called out to Valeria.

「Are you dissatisfied with something of this clothing?」

「Rather than dissatisfied—」

When Valeria unfolded her crossed arms, she flipped the hem of the tabard with a “piro”.

「Isn't this somewhat too transparent?」

Underneath the tabard, its torso was clad in a white and thin silk dress. Moreover, the silhouettes of a bustier and hot-pants were faintly displayed under that really light and soft cloth.

「But this's the formal clothing of a Dominas-sama...」

「I understand that, but this's somehow a bit more...」

Valeria who continued to complain with a “buchi buchi” suddenly shut up at that moment and grabbed the back of a chair that was placed facing the torso.

「Bababababa, Valeriaaa!？」

The double doors were abruptly pushed open, and a breathless and plump man rushed in.

「I, I don't recall permitting this! O, o, our Costacurta House's, o, only daughter—ggo?!?」

「Don't come in! I'm in the midst of changing clothes! You're irritating!」

The chair flew and hit the man directly before these three sentences could reach him.

「Bugogogogo」

Blown off with an odd groan, the man tumbled on the luxurious carpet, rolled out to the hallway, crashed into the wall and finally came to a stop.

「Nei! Close the doors!」

「I, is that fine...?」

「Ne—i!」

「R, right away!」

Valeria urged the hesitant maid to shut the doors, folded her arms again and looked towards the rear over her shoulder. Her bosom that was filled with a moderate plumpness distorted with a “munyuri”, and the shadow of her cleavage deepened.

「Oi, Valeria! Can you open this?!」

The door was knocked on with a “domu domu” from the hallway's side.

「Explain to me what's this about! Didn't I say that I won't permit this!? For you who's the only daughter of our Costacurta House to become a Dominas—」

「What are you saying now...to be chosen as one of the only twelve Dominas in the world, isn't that the greatest honour? What on earth are you dissatisfied with, Chichi-ue?」

「That's so but...h, however, once you become a Dominas, um, y,
your marriageable age is—」

「My marriageable age is inconsequential now!」

The wrinkle on her forehead deepened even more, and Valeria shouted.

「—That's enough, so be quiet, Chichi-ue! I can't concentrate if you're noisy!」

「What are you saying!? You've the obligation of choosing a good husband and giving birth to a successor, you know! It's still not too late now; make a request to His Majesty the King and the Head Director and decline to be a Dominas—」

「Chichi-ue—」

When Valeria interrupted the man's speech, she turned towards the doors and extended her right hand.

Aligning her index and middle fingers, she pointed at the man who should be on the other side of the doors.

「—Becoming a Dominas is my dream, and also the first step to rebuilding the Costacurta House! Don't be a hindrance!」

「W, w...i, if it's rebuilding this house, then I—」

「Assistance from Chichi-ue's parents' home is unnecessary! The head of this house is, to the bitter end, this me. Don't forget that Chichi-ue is no more than a mere guardian!」

「Of, of course I'm aware of that—but as your father, I—」

「If you continue to talk verbosely any further」

Valeria's eyes became smaller with a “kyu”, and a red line appeared faintly at the back of her right hand. A red light ran while flickering on the complex shape, which was drawn by straight lines and curves

intertwining innumerably, as if it was pulsing.

「...Shall I blow you off with the doors?」

「—Uhi!」

Dragging out a short scream, the man's presence and footsteps faded away from the other side of the doors.

When Valeria dropped her shoulders and sighed, she blew at her right hand where the line of mysterious light had disappeared from.

「...Um, Ojou-sama...?」

「What's it, Maru?」

「I don't intend to go against Ojou-sama's thoughts, but won't you say that Danna-sama's words also has a point...?」

「That's right. Once I become a Dominas, it's a law that I must firmly protect my purity in the duration of my duty—in that case, until I served out my duty peacefully nine years later, not to mention producing a successor, even marriage is」

「Even if it's nine years, I'm still twenty-five! ...Well certainly, marriage at twenty-five is by no means early」

Most of the town girls living in the castle town married and gave birth to children by twenty years old. It wasn't unusual for girls who were sixteen like Valeria to be a parent already. Even for nobles' children, they were generally engaged at the age of ten, and marriages were normal by twenty years old. Honestly, twenty-five years old was quite late for a noble's marriageable age.

Valeria, who had pouted her lips and grumbled, shook her head as though to shake off these pointless thoughts, and brushed up her long hair.

「Anyway! My first step now is to regain the Costacurta House's

past brilliance with my power!」

「That dedication is great but」

「That's right. Since you're chosen to be a Dominas with your hard-earned top results, if you don't have a bit more self-awareness hereafter」

「Self-awareness? I totally have that! Plenty of it! It's more than enough!」

「A person with the self-awareness of a Dominas won't clench her fists and emphasise that while in her undergarments indefinitely」

「Besides, if you don't change your clothes soon, you won't be in time for the ceremony in the royal palace」

「Ah—ah—, I can't hear you, I can't hear yo~u」

Ignoring the troublesome maids' admonitions, Valeria removed the amply frilly bustier from the torso and put it on her bosom.

♦♦♦

Sitting on a chair placed at the corner of the workshop that wasn't well lit by the sun, Dimitar yawned repeatedly.

「Lack of sleep, boy?」

The man, who was in a white robe and tampering with a gigantic sword placed on the work table, glanced at the boy fleetingly.

「...Maa, frankly speaking」

The white-robed man with stubble said so and laughed.

「—You're still sixteen, right? What'll you do if you get exhausted from now?」

「I'm not at fault. The one to blame is Dorrie」

「Dorrie? Who's that?」

「Someone from『Boazheddo』that is close to the south gate」

「Ah, is she that widow? She's slightly famous for liking younger men; which reminds me」

The man nodded as though to say that he understood and immediately smiled broadly as well.

「—This's outrageous even though you're young. To have a lack of sleep because you were womanising」

「I didn't fool around in particular. I was only drunk because of the sake that was served there」

「In any case, you're being careless, you know? Even though you're taking up an important duty from today—」

「Please cease your sermon」

Dimitar stifled another yawn and gazed out of the window.

This workshop was located fairly at the end of the premise of the military drill site which was situated behind the royal palace; the people coming and going were scarce, and it was very quiet. Dimitar would enter and nap here often despite having no business here.

「—Adjustment completed, tto」

The man put away his removed monocle into the white robe's pocket and spoke.

「It's still far off from perfection, but let's get data with this for a while」

「It's fine if it can be used」

Dimitar received the sword and swung it lightly with one hand. A line of blue light emerged on the back of his hand, ran towards the

surface of the sword's blade and extended up to its tip.

「...I feel that it has become slightly lighter than last night」

「It's not just your feeling, I've improved it to be so」

「As expected of a genius and abnormal inventor」

「Don't praise and speak ill of me at the same time, brat」

Lighting a fire in an austere silver khiser, the man puffed out smoke and mixed in a sigh.

「—Leaving that aside, you've a meeting, right? Go quickly without idling around」

「It doesn't matter since it isn't something formal especially. ...In the first place, I'm not interested in it; something like taking care of a young girl」

「This brat is talking big. Even as a joke, the other party is Her Eminence, you know? It'd have been fine to refuse if you dislike it」

「...Iya, I'll do it」

Dimitar returned the sword to the scabbard.

「Since I can't trouble Lucius and Oba-sama any more than this」

「Then refrain from speaking carelessly. You're in a position that's easily envied by people one way or another」

「I understand that too」

「Then it's fine but...ma, please convey my regards to the Head Director」

The man reached out for a wine bottle while smoking his khiser with a “puka puka”.

「.....」

When he exited the workshop, the clear sunlight shone from above the boy.

Dimitar was appointed as a Hiera Glaphicos today.

To the boy who had aimed to be an official member of the Seal Chivalric Order (*Furigana: Templar Aegis*), this was another path which he didn't expect and must advance on after one of his dreams fell apart.



Valeria sighed exaggeratedly while walking along a corridor where stone pillars stood close together.

「Ah~ah, as expected, I'm feeling nervous. My shoulders are extremely stiff~」

「...I think it's early to relax though」

Karin Rudbeck, who was selected to be a new Dominas due to her results ranking after Valeria, muttered so with a tone that lacked intonation. Perhaps Karin was also mentally worn out, but she wouldn't show it on her face.

In contrast to Valeria who'd reveal her thoughts immediately on her face, Karin never revealed her emotions very much. According to the person herself, it wasn't because she killed off her consciousness, but that she had acquired it naturally from her childhood. Consequently, she was often mistaken as a woman who was cold like ice, but she was completely unconcerned of that matter.

Therefore, the glance and the few words, which the current Karin had thrown to her friend who was walking beside her, indeed carried a trace of coldness typical of her.

「...You should be meeting with your Hiera Glaphicos afterwards,

right?」

「Ah—, that's so. ...Who could my Hiera Glaphicos be?」

「Did you not hear of it?」

「Un. —On that point, Karin is lucky. Yours is Petra, right?」

「Yes」

「The one whom you're entrusting your skin to is your intimate cousin from childhood; isn't that the best pattern where you don't have to be mindful? I'm truly envious」

「It's also embarrassing when entrusting your skin to relatives」

「Is that how it is?」

「Yes. ...It's far more preferable than having a male Hiera Glahpicos though」

「Eh!？」

Valeria involuntarily asked again at Karin's calm murmur.

「T, there's such a thing?」

「I can't say there isn't, can I? Since there are actually many male Hiera Glahpicos」

「I know that, but it isn't common for the female us to have a male Hiera Glaphicos...is it? It isn't, right?」

「It is. Though assuming that's so, they're either completely matured old men or the person's relatives at most, I guess?」

「Be it Ojii-chans or relatives, I'll definitely hate it! After all, for a man whom I don't like to—」

「You won't need to worry. Setting aside such magic warriors, I've

never heard of male Hiera Glaphicos being assigned to Dominas. If in the unlikely event that there's an improper conduct between a man and a woman, it'll become an unprecedented scandal.]

「T, that's true...」

Valeria heaved a sigh of relief and smoothed down her chest.

Certainly, unlike the general magic warriors that had no regards to being a man or woman, Dominas were unmarried women without any exception. In addition, until their duties were completed, they were obligated to remain chaste. Hence, a case where the exclusive Hiera Glahpicos attached to a Dominas was a man was usually improbable.

「—Well then, see you later】

「Yes. Please let me know which of the worst Hiera Glaphicos you're assigned with】

「Don't say such things that'll make me uneasy!】

Slapping Karin's back lightly, Valeria bid farewell to her friend and headed towards the magic academy.

The Royal Magic Academy (*Furigana: Prasa Marefikos*) was an institution which managed crest magic warriors (*Furigana: Hiera marefikos*) affiliated to this Amaddo kingdom. This institution in the capital had branches located in every place of the kingdom, but Dominas with their unique positions weren't different from magic warriors. Thus in this country, the girls were also under the magic academy's management during peace time.

「—Pardon my intrusion】

Guided by the female secretary, Valeria stepped into the Head Director's office.

「Valeria Costacurta has arrived】

She placed her hand on her chest, bent her knees slightly and bowed so that the hem of the tabard didn't spread out. For Valeria, who was a Dominas that didn't even need to personally bow to the whole country's ministers, to take such a respectful bow wasn't due to the other party being the magic academy's Head Director, but rather, it was because she was the kingdom's greatest magic user.

This beautiful woman in black dress, who held two names of Orvieto Richternach and "Witch of Sunlight", was an existence that stood at the top of all magic warriors of this Amaddo which was a well-known magic superpower in the continent.

「Welcome, Valeria-jou. Please be at ease」

Orvieto, who had put down the quill pen and stood up, gave a gentle smile and ushered Valeria in. Although she heard that Orvieto was already close to forty, her appearance might pass off as only twenty. The number of female magic warriors who gossiped that this was also the effects of a certain "magic" weren't few.

Orvieto offered the sofa to Valeria and placed the glass that she had personally filled with wine in front of her.

「Sorry to have you come here specially」

「Not at all」

「Your exclusive Hiera Glaphicos will arrive very soon. ...That's some nerve making the famous Dominas wait, good grief」

Valeria tilted the glass and smiled unintentionally. It was highly unthinkable for such a candid figure—though it could also be said to look young—to be one of this country's leaders. Compared to parties like the ministers from somewhere or great nobles who'd complain about trivial customs despite just meeting them, Orvieto was much easier to talk to.

Moistening her lips with the first-class wine, Valeria asked deliberately.

「Um...may I ask something first?」

「What's it, I wonder?」

「Even though Karin's Hiera Glaphicos was immediately decided to be Petra, why wasn't my Hiera Glaphicos decided readily?」

「I think you know that Dominas's magic crests (*Furigana: Hierateika*) are denser and more complex than the general magic warriors', but that trend is especially strong in your case. Therefore, when it comes to Hiera Glaphicos who can repair them, the number of them is surely limited. Hence it takes time for the selection.」

「Is...that so? But it has been decided already, right? Who's it?」

Orvieto didn't answer the girl's question, but just shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

「Um—」

「He's here」

Orvieto put down her glass and leaned against the edge of her desk.

The door was knocked on at almost the same time.

「Enter」

「Excuse me」

Looking at the young man who had entered the director's office with a modest knock, Valeria unintentionally stared in amazement.

Was his approximate age sixteen like Valeria or seventeen? There was a childishness that had yet to mature remaining in his features, but his height was one head taller than Valeria. It might be due to having an adequate amount of firm muscles in the necessary places that he didn't seem thin despite being slender overall.

「I'm sorry for being late」

The boy with dark grey hair faced Orvieto and bowed deeply without looking at Valeria who was seated on the sofa.

「You're ten minutes late...did something happen, I wonder?」

「I was held back by Chief Engineer」

「By Albiol-san?」

「Hai. He said to send his regards to the Head Director」

「...Very well. Then I'll leave it as such」

Orvieto smiled sweetly and changed her sight to Valeria.

「Though it's late, I'll introduce you」

Orvieto pointed at Valeria who had been sitting on the sofa.

「—Over there is the newly chosen Dominas, Valeria Costacurta-jou. You also know of the Costacurta House, right, Dii?」

「Hai」

「...?」

Valeria who had heard the conversation between Orvieto and the boy frowned again. She was bothered by the fact that Orvieto seemed very close to the boy.

Indifferent to such a Valeria's doubt, Orvieto put her hand on the back of the boy standing beside her.

「This's Dimitar Richternach」

「Richternach...?」

Valeria once again stared in wonder and ruminated on the boy's name.

「If he's a Richternach, is he perhaps—?」

「Yes. He's my cousin's son」

「Eh!？」

「I'll have this child be your exclusive Hiera Glaphicos from today」

「Ehhh!？」

Seeing Valeria raised another voice of hysterical surprise, Dimitar Richternach gave a small laugh and bowed courteously with his right hand on his chest.

「I look forward to working with you, Costacurta-geika」

She didn't hear the boy's words which somehow felt like treating people as fools very much. More than that, she was completely speechless from the shock of hearing that her Hiera Glaphicos was a man of all things, and moreover, a boy whose age wasn't different from hers.

Hiera Glaphicos took on the roles of adjusting, repairing and occasionally filling in new magic crests that were carved onto the crest magic warrior's whole body.

In brief, Valeria must expose her own skin to Dimitar who was her exclusive Hiera Glaphicos if needed.

「U, um...Head Director—」

Valeria, who had repeatedly took deep breaths several times and finally recovered her composure, tried to ask Orvieto on how it turned out to be like this.

But before that,

「Then Head Director, I shall take my leave with this」

「Ara, you're going back already?」

「I've to tidy up various matter」

「...I won't pry deeply into them, but don't be too rash, okay?」

「Hai」

「And also drop by our place once in a while, okay? Since that child will be pleased too」

「That's my intention」

Dimitar answered admirably and left the director's room. For Valeria, it was as if she just simply happened to be present at a meeting between relatives rather than coming to meet her Hiera Glaphicos.

「—Head Director!」

When Dimitar was gone, Valeria raised her voice and asked again.

「What in the world is the meaning of this!?」

「Eh?」

「Saying “eh?”—」

Valeria felt a terrible languidness at Orvieto who had asked a question in return with a puzzled face. Today was the first time she had directly exchanged words with Orvieto, but she never thought that the kingdom's most talented woman who was surely called the “Witch of Sunlight” was such a calm person. Whenever she said something, Valeria felt that the image she had of her crumbled with a “poro poro”.

Valeria pressed her temple with her fingertip with a “guri guri” and said in a low voice.

「Um, that's right...I want to ask why is my Hiera Glaphicos that child from just now」

「I said so a while ago, right? Your magic crests are exceptionally high in density and complex, so the number of Hiera Glaphicos who can handle them is limited. Besides, it's your Chichi-ue's, Costacurta-kyou's, request of wanting a person, who can protect you continuously no matter what, assigned to you; with an enormous donation to our magic academy」

「F, father did!?!」

「Hence, taking into account of such matter, I've concluded that child is the best to be your Hiera Glaphicos...or rather, he's the only one」

「Please don't conclude this yet!」

Forgetting who the other party was, Valeria unintentionally slammed on the table with her fists.

「I mean, isn't he a man? A man!」

「Yes. That child is very reliable, you know? And his sword skills are certainly—」

「He's a man, a man! A man! I'll say this many times, but isn't he a man?! For the female me to have a male Hiera Glaphicos...such a thing is embarrassing!」

「Ara, you're worrying about such a thing?」

「That's the most important issue to me!」

Valeria's face became a deep red and she fumbled her words.

「—After all, I'm a Dominas! Or rather, even if it has never happen, should an improper conduct occur in the worst case...」

「It's all right」

Interrupting the words of Valeria who talked on and on, Orvieto spoke indifferently.

「Dii thinks nothing of women except for those older than him. That child has such an interest after all」

「Ha, a...?」

「In other words, he won't get involved with young women like you」

「Y...you can't be sure of such a thing, right!? You don't know what are men actually thinking of—」

「Valeria」

Orvieto interrupted the girl's words again and announced in a calm but solemn tone.

「If I said that it's all right, then it's all right. Dii won't make a move on you. —If you still can't believe me, shall I stake even my neck on this matter?」

「Head Director...!」

Valeria had no words to reciprocate when Orvieto said to that extent. Valeria shook her lips with an “au au” for a while and eventually had no choice but to leave the director's room dejectedly as she couldn't oppose doggedly anymore.

「Auu—」

The Dominas's tabard which she had worn for the first time felt extremely heavy. She didn't even notice well the people who were passing by bowing respectfully to her. For the present Valeria, the reality of her assigned Hiera Glaphicos being a man was much heavier than the delight of formally becoming a Dominas at last.

Before she knew, Valeria had begun to think of methods to break this deadlock.

Setting aside whether it was favouritism because he was her

relative—though Valeria didn't want to believe that Orvieto was such a person—Orvieto's trust in that Dimitar boy was seriously odd. From Orvieto's tone just now, she wouldn't remove Dimitar as Valeria's exclusive Hiera Glaphicos no matter how many times she demanded for a change of Hiera Glaphicos.

Nonetheless, the option of Valeria resigning as a Dominas was impossible.

Dominas, who were the wives of God, were merely twelve people in the seven countries of the “Holy Alliance (*Furigana: Riga Santourear*)”, and there were only three of them in this Amaddo which was referred to as the continent's strongest country. To young women who possessed magic talents, becoming a Dominas was a dream that had more prestige than meeting the royalty for the first time.

Not to mention, Valeria had the objective of restoring the fallen Costacurta House. She couldn't abandon the path to success which she had obtained at great pains just because her Hiera Glaphicos was a man.

「—」

Valeria, who was walking while caressing her soft and full lips, emerged at the magic academy's quadrangle and suddenly stopped her feet.

That boy was at the fountain of the sunny quadrangle. He was sitting on the edge of the fountain and letting out big yawns in succession. Although he looked surprisingly sloppier than during the meeting in the director's room just now, this bored figure of his was probably the boy's true nature.

Valeria tightened her eyebrows with a “kiriri” and approached Dimitar Richternach.

「Richternach-kyou!」

「...Ha?」

Looking up at Valeria who had come along, Dimitar rubbed his eyes sleepily.

「I'll say this bluntly」

「What?」

「You shall decline it」

「Like I said, what's this about?」

Dimitar's tone was awfully rude and had no fragments of his courtesy from some time ago. As expected, he probably feigned friendliness in Orvieto's presence. Although Valeria also couldn't find fault at people's wording too much, it was absurd to even expressly address him with the honorific of "kyou" given the situation.

Valeria raised her eyebrows and thrust her finger at the tip of Dimitar's nose.

「It's about my Hiera Glaphicos, Hiera Glaphicos! I'm telling you to decline the role of my exclusive Hiera Glaphicos!」

「...What are you saying?」

Dimitar brushed Valeria's hand away lightly and stood up.

As expected, Dimitar was taller when lining up like this. Valeria was suddenly in a position where she had to look up at the other party, but she thrust her finger at the tip of Dimitar's nose again without being overpowered by it.

「What's with you!? You didn't bow to a Dominas! Like this, I can't let you become a Hiera Glaphicos more and more. Resign immediately before you make the Head Director lose face!」

「It's none of your concern」



Dimitar brushed Valeria's hand away once more and spat out while conversely grinding his index finger against the tip of the girl's nose.

「Though I've become your Hiera Glaphicos, I don't remember becoming your servant. I'm fine with bowing to you in between work, but I don't intend to bow repeatedly even in other times. ... Good grief, what's up with you telling someone to decline the role of a Hiera Glaphicos?」

「Ugugu!？」

「It's not "ugugu", right, idiot. Worry about yourself rather than meddle in people's course of action, since it'll also affect my life if you make a blunder in a foolish place」

「A, are you sane!？」

Valeria, who had brushed away Dimitar's hand and held down her nose, tried to censure on how rude and insolent the other party's attitude was with her characteristic stubbornness.

「I'm a Dominas, you know? To—」

「Yaa (Yo)」

A gentle voice overlapped exactly afterwards, and Valeria gasped in surprise and looked back.

「I wondered whether you're still around here since I heard that you've met already, but I'm glad to be able to meet you」

A youth wearing the Seal Chivalric Order's ceremonial clothing smiled cheerfully and said so.

「—Lucius-sama!」

Valeria pushed Dimitar aside and ran up to the youth.

「It's been a long time, Lucius-sama!」

「Oh Costacurta-geika... Congratulations on this occasion」

When Lucius bowed respectfully, he took Valeria's right hand and kissed the back of it lightly.

「Don't stand on formalities...please call me Valeria, Lucius-sama♡」

Shaking her hips with a “kuneri” and blushing, Valeria gazed at Lucius with upturned eyes.

Lucius who served as the Seal Chivalric Order's vice-leader was the target of yearning for the nobles' daughters that went in and out of the royal palace. In addition to being sociable without being arrogant despite his handsomeness and intelligence, he was still twenty years old and the only son of that Orvieto. The merit of being the heir to the Richternach House with ancient and honourable origin probably excited the daughters, who had been searching frantically for a promising husband, more.

Naturally, Valeria was no exception. Since going in and out of the imperial court as a Dominas candidate, she'd find the opportunity to call out “Lucius-sama Lucius-sama”, approach him and have him remember her face and name. Although she was looked at with cold eyes from her friend, Karin, it was a small joy to Valeria who had to seal off her way of life as a young girl for nine years if she became a Dominas successfully.

「Lucius-sama! I'm sorry that you're in the midst of your personal affairs, but I'm planning to hold a modest party in my mansion to celebrate my inauguration as a Dominas now. If Luicus-sama doesn't mind and can also come by all means—」

「Ah, I'm sorry, I'll leave that talk for another time. —Excuse me for a while」

Lucius cut off Valeria's words midway without being sarcastic, held the mantle which represented his status as the Seal Chivalric Order's vice-leader and approached Dimitar.

「I've heard from Haha-ue, Dii. Do your best」

「It's not something that you've to say to that extent」

「—Eh?」

Seeing Lucius addressing Dimitar intimately, Valeria stared in amazement several times. Even the nobles' daughters going in and out of the imperial court could only exchange formal conversations with Lucius, and yet this insolent—insolent, rude and irritating boy looked away somewhat sulkily without a delightful face despite being called out by Lucius. From Valeria's standpoint, it was unbelievable.

「However, not everyone can become an exclusive Hiera Glaphicos that's attached to a Dominas. At the very least, it's a world where your true strength is questioned more than in the Seal Chivalric Order which can be entered by anyone if you're a great noble's son, right?」

「Isn't that because Oba-sama handled this skilfully?」

「Even if you're a relative, Haha-ue isn't a person who'd put an incapable person in an unsuitable position. Making you an exclusive Hiera Glaphicos meant that she expected you to have that much capability. —Don't belittle Haha-ue」

「Iya, I didn't mean to say it with such intention...」

Dimitar scratched his head and smiled a little bashfully.

「Nkkiiiiii!」

Valeria came to her senses suddenly, pushed her way through the intimate mood that hung in the air between Lucius and Dimitar and interrupted the two of them.

「—Lucius-sama! What in the world is the meaning of this!?」

「Ha? Iya, even if you ask me that...」

The puzzled Lucius looked at Dimitar and tilted his head to the side.

「Did you explain it properly to Valeria-jou?」

「I don't have such an obligation」

「Oi oi」

Lucius smiled wryly, mixed in a sigh and spoke to Valeria.

「You might have heard it from mother, but Dimitar is my relative. Our mothers' relationship is that of a cousinhood」

「I, I...have the feeling I heard that」

What Valeria wanted to hear wasn't that, but the matter of how they were on such good terms. Valeria's parents had one or two cousins, but it couldn't be said that she was close with their sons or daughters. It was in fact a weak relation where she either knew their names only or didn't.

Nevertheless, Lucius and Dimitar were on good terms just like close friends. Valeria couldn't accept that, and above all else, was envious.

Dimitar, who was watching the expression of such a Valeria intently, smiled broadly and placed Lucius's hand around his shoulder.

「Ah...!」

「Unfortunately, my parents died early. Until I began living alone, I was taken care of in Lucius's mansion」

「A, addressing Lucius-sama without honorific...! Furthermore, you were previously a freeloader!?」

The blood of Valeria's whole body was boiling strongly with a "gura gura". Whether Lucius noticed it or not, he smiled and shook his head.

「He isn't a freeloader. Dii is like a biological younger brother to me」

「Y, younger brother...!」

Dimitar looked at Valeria, raised his lips with a “niyari” again and gave a triumphant smile.

「Is this somehow fate? Presently, our Richternach House only consists of three people; mother, me and Dii as well. Hence, mother and I think of Dii as a real family member and rely on him」

「Stop it. I'm always being taken care of one-sidedly」

As if showing it off to Valeria, Dimitar patted Lucius's shoulder. Rather than as if, Dimitar was evidently showing it off to Valeria. Upon seeing through Valeria's goodwill towards Lucius, it could only be thought of as being done on purpose.

Lucius spoke to Valeria, who was grinding her teeth as if to spread the blood from her gums, with a refreshing smile without noticing her feelings as usual.

「Of course, mother didn't choose Dii to be your exclusive Hiera Glaphicos because of favouritism」

「Y, yes, I already...」

「Not just as a Hiera Glaphicos, Dii is also very excellent as a guard. Though he's a little sharp-tongued...」

「Ha, a...」

Valeria wanted to say how on earth this was a little, but unable to refute Lucius's words, a cramped smile clung onto her mouth.

「—In any case, it's all right to rely on Dii if you're troubled by something, since he's used to the ways of the world for his age」

「I, I shall do so then」

Valeria couldn't say that she was exactly troubled now, and moving her stiff facial muscles forcibly, she somehow showed a smile.

「Then I'll be excusing myself here, Valeria-jou. —Dii, please don't be rude」

「Yeah」

Waving his hand with a “*hira hira*”, Dimitar saw off Lucius. On the other hand, speaking of Valeria, it took all her might just to bend her knees and bow to shake the hem of her tabard gracefully.

「—Bye then」

When Lucius's retreating figure disappeared, Dimitar made one big yawn and started walking.

「Ah—j, just a minute!」

Valeria called Dimitar to a halt at once.

「Still that talk—」

Dimitar looked at Valeria from over his shoulders, snorted with a “*fufun*” and narrowed his eyes.

「...If you want to make me resign no matter what, then appeal directly to His Majesty. —But at that time, the Head Director who recommended me will lose her face. Don't forget that」

「...!」

While Valeria was at a loss for words, Dimitar left.

Feeling that she had somehow lost for being unable to say anything in return at the end, Valeria plucked off her neatly arranged blond hair with a “*shaku shaku*”.

「Nkkiiiii!」

◆◆◆

Isaac, who had put the pruning shears at the branch of a rose with

countless buds, read the letter carried by an express messenger from the south and frowned.

「...Why did you bring such a topic to me? Shouldn't it normally be brought to Chichi-ue first?」

「His Majesty had left for Taroma for an inspection at the same time when the investiture of the Dominas ended...」

「Inspection? It's obviously a lie. After all, that place is his third mistress's territory, isn't it? Pruna is it, that voluptuous widow?」

「Setting that aside—」

The Home Minister, Kamunyas, who had knelt before Isaac, spoke vaguely and wiped his forehead. The minister who was already reaching old age was dripping with sweat from the tension and uneasiness rather than this glasshouse's high temperature.

Isaac rolled up the note to its original cylindrical shape, tossed it back to Kamunyas and picked up the shears again.

「—So? What in the world do you want me to do by showing such a thing to me?」

「The Crown Prince is the head of this castle until His Majesty returned. If possible, please give your judgement concerning this matter promptly—」

「Then isn't it fine if we do nothing?」

「Ha!?」

「I said don't do anything; that's to say, don't act tactlessly. Do you not understand?」

「B, but! Suppose this information is true, we've to take whatever measures as soon as possible!」

「If you think it's better to do something, then isn't it fine if you do it

somehow by yourselves without telling me everything? Or is it because you're worried that when it becomes a question of who's responsible later, you want to pretend that it was my order until the end? Well?」

「T, that's not the case at all—!」

「Then, if Chichi-ue becomes angry at me afterwards, will all of you take the responsibility in my stead?」

「Eh!?」

「Ah, you disagree with that? Then we'll wait for Chichi-ue's instruction」

Shrugging his shoulders, Isaac went back to pruning the roses.

In contrast to his father, the Amaddo's king who was famous for being the continent's best hero and skilful in battle, the son of the eleventh generation Jeffren was a handsome man with a slender figure, and his name was known in various countries as an expert in rose cultivation. It wasn't strange even if the youth seriously thought of looking after his roses more than the country's serious affairs.

Kamunyas wiped his sweat with the back of his hand and sidled up to Isaac.

「U, understood! If Your Highness has an idea or something, then please teach it to me. I'll use that as a reference, and it'll be our decision to the end—」

「Eh? Is that fine? I feel bad somehow」

Isaac who had looked back with a hypocritical smile nodded with a triumphant face after brooding for a little while.

「Let's see...given that place's location, we can't send in a large army thoughtlessly; and before that, it's impossible to mobilise an army of that extent right now」

「T, then first of all...?」

「Gather provisions and warhorses first since a speedy movement is indispensable if it turns into a departure for the front line, and I think it's also necessary to choose strong people for soldiers. Anyway, finish the preparation for departure before Chichi-ue's reply arrives!」

「Is it fine with just that...?」

「Of course it isn't. Dispatch personnel to go ahead and collect accurate information. Even if the army can't be mobilised immediately, this much is possible, right?」

「Acknowledged! I shall discuss with Garido-kyou and dispatch a suitable scouting party at once!」

「Ah—, the army is no good」

「Ha!?!」

「After all, low ranking soldiers can't decide and act by themselves when an unforeseen situation occurs, right? It has to be a person who can act appropriately on his own judgement at the critical moment. A person who's permitted that much power and will never betray, and in addition, can endure combat. ...Is there no one?」

「Even if you say that...」

Seeing Kamunyas's perplexed expression, Isaac began to make the roses that were blooming splendidly into a bouquet with a sigh.

「Fine then, I've an idea」

「Is that true!?!」

「It can't be helped even if you don't believe me on this matter. Let's borrow the magic academy's power just a little」

「Magic academy? But to rashly use magic warriors for this mission —」

「That's why it'll be fine if we don't use them rashly. ...To begin with, our country invested an enormous budget in the magic academy and put effort into training magic warriors was for them to be useful in such times, right? We aren't doing charitable work after all」

Removing the gloves and apron, Isaac put on a green velvet mantle, carried the bouquet and left the room at a quick pace.

「Where are you heading to, Your Highness?」

「Like I said, the magic academy」

「In that case, I'll send a messenger immediately and summon Head Director Orvieto to the royal palace...」

「If you do that, it'll take one or two hours just to meet up. Isn't that a waste of time? I can save time when I make the visit, and above all, even the Head Director will find it difficult to refuse, don't you agree? She'll have to hear me out no matter how unreasonable it is」

「I, I see—」

Kamunyas nodded his head exaggeratedly at Isaac's words.

It was an open secret in this Amaddo's royal palace that Isaac, whom the neighbouring countries tended to see him as a lazy son that was only engrossed in rose cultivation, had in fact concealed a face of a schemer which was different from his king father underneath that vast expression. Otherwise, Kamunyas wouldn't have shown up here to listen to Isaac's opinion.

「At any rate」

Shaking the rose bouquet, Isaac looked back at Kamunyas.

「I'll have a suitable person do a proper investigation」



Don Puyol, who had been pacing aimlessly inside the office like a hungry stray dog, was surprised by the footsteps of soldiers running outside the window and hurriedly hid behind his work desk.

「Mayor...please don't be so frightened」

When Mazzali who managed the stationing troops said so in amazement, Puyol began to stretch lightly on the spot while combing down his moustache.

「O, of course not, something like being frightened, I'm not frightened at all. You, this's um—physical training in preparation for an emergency. Fu, ho, ha!」

「It's exactly that emergency now」

Seated at the conference table, Commanding Officer Mazzali gave a long sigh and folded his arms.

「...Though I said don't be frightened, this isn't a situation where we can think optimistically since a third of the town has already fallen under the influence of the rebels. Moreover, the number of people trying to join them increases by the day」

「If that's the case, y, you shouldn't say things that'd make me frightened...」

「If you don't grasp these facts accurately as facts」

「That may be so but...」

Puyol, who had shook his plump body and sat on his reserved seat, fiddled with a quill pen while resting his chin in his hand.

「About that, has the report to the throne which was sent to the capital requesting for reinforcement properly arrived there? Isn't it already difficult to repress the rebels with just the troops that are stationed here?」

「That's for sure. There's report of users with combat magic mixed among the rebels. If we allow the rampancy of such fellows, we may have to abandon this town sooner or later」

「What!? There shouldn't have been such citizens in this town that doesn't have a magic academy's branch (*Furigana: Monasteria marefikos*), right?」

「Yes. They probably came from other places. I think that such people from somewhere showed up and lent a hand to the rebellion」

「Unununu...w, when will the reinforcement arrives?」

「Well...even if the report reaches the throne, it's doubtful whether reinforcement will come」

「W, why?」

「This Seriba is too close to the national border」

Commanding Officer Mazzali shrugged his shoulders with a fed up look.

Although his ability in handling domestic affairs might be high, this mayor with short moustache had no understanding and decisiveness in the military aspect. Although Mazzali felt dizzy at having to do something about this state of emergency by almost himself, he didn't spit it out as a grumble. Mazzali was a soldier, and he was taught that one should do his best in any situation.

Mazzali pointed out on the map that was spread out on the table.

「—As you can see, if you cross over the mountainous district in the south, that place is already the land of the strongly influenced barbaric believers of Bigerou」

「Of course I know such a thing! I'm the mayor of this Seriba after all!」

With his moustache quivering and eyebrows raised, Puyol struck the table, but soon tilted his head to the side.

「—So, why is that the reason for reinforcement being delayed?」

「Like I said, if they send in a large army to this town thoughtlessly, it's likely that it'll provoke Bigerou」

「Mu? In other words, that's—?」

「I can't deny the possibility of Bigerou viewing the movement of our country's army as a portent of national border violation, and then sending in troops by crossing the mountain」

「What did you say!? That's bad! If done tactlessly, won't a military conflict with Bigerou happen at this area!? Not to mention the rebellion's disturbance!」

「That's right. Hence, it's highly possible that they won't be able dispatch reinforcement readily」

「That's even worse! It's impossible to subjugate the rebels with just the war potential of a very small garrison of such a remote town, isn't it?」

「...I'm sorry for having a very small garrison」

While the population of Seriba was roughly two thousand, the stationing troops numbered less than four hundred. At the present where one third of the citizens had already become estranged, the number of rebels was reckoned to be close to seven hundred. Needless to say, not all of them were combat personnel, and even for an instant, since this side were regular soldiers, they wouldn't be overcome simply by the difference in numbers, but it was unpredictable how it'd turn out beyond this point. In any case, defectors had begun to appear from among the garrison's soldiers.

「—How should I say, by any chance, is the Bigerou's barbaric believers not the ones pulling the strings from behind in this current

rebellion!？」

「Even if that's so, it doesn't change the situation surrounding us one bit. —Anyway, until reinforcement or messenger from the capital arrives, we'll have to hold out with our existing war potential. I hope that the mayor has that conviction too」

「Even if I've that conviction, I'm of no use whatsoever! I'm a useless bibliophile!」

「Please don't say that proudly」

The commanding officer stood up, pulled his hat low over his eyes and sighed heavily again.

Chapter 02 - The Thing Called World

Whether it was a Dominas or a mere magic warrior, the system of using magic had no difference. Crest magic was the method of making the inexhaustible supply of energy existing in this world appeared in this world via magic crests—magic squares that were applied onto one's own body.

However, not everyone could use that technique. Roughly speaking, it might be a case where one in ten people could use it.

Additionally, if limited to users of elementary magic such as weaving fire and creating gentle breeze, people who could reach the level of being called a magic warrior might not even be one in a hundred.

It was taught in Redountra's religion that magic was a technique invented by God to seal evil, and He imparted it to humans. It was something that only people who had faith in God could use.



But in reality, that ability wasn't proportional to the faith of the person himself.

Sitting on his usual chair by the workshop's window, Dimitar who had been grinding a whetstone against Jagieruka's blade looked at a tiny figure wandering around at the corner of his vision and furrowed his brow.

「—Oi」

「Hai~?」

Giving creaks of “gachi gachi” and coming to a halt, Bettina looked back at Dimitar.

「You...are you really accompanying us?」

「Of course desu~!」

Putting the large wooden box that she had held in both hands onto her shoulder with a “hyoi”, Bettina struck her seemingly really strong chest with her fist.

「—It's Valeria-sama's demand that she wanted at least one female attendant to accompany her besides Dimitar-san desuyou」

「Iya...but are you really a girl?」

「Of course desu~!」

It wasn't fully understood whether Bettina, who had struck her chest again with a “gashin”, was a boy or girl with just a glance. That was because her whole body was wrapped in short and stout armour.

Certainly, the voice which was heard from the inside of the helmet was that of a lovely girl; with even a height that was slightly taller than Dimitar's waist, it could be said that it didn't match her age which she had declared to be thirteen.

However, Dimitar had never seen the real face of this self-alleged beautiful girl directly despite going in and out of this workshop for a long time. The niece of the eccentric Chief Engineer always wore the pink full body armour, and her real face wasn't shown to anyone except her uncle.

Easily carrying a large wooden box which was probably twice of her size and piling it up at a workshop's corner, Bettina spoke.

「—Dimitar-san is quite a brute, aren't you?」

「...Did you say that while knowing what it means?」

「Oji-sama seemed to have said it」

「That middle-aged man...」

Dimitar threw the whetstone against the wall and clicked his tongue.

「Since imprudently assigning a female attendant doesn't mean that she won't fall victim to Dimitar, it was decided for me to accompany you desuyou」

「Do as you like」

「Moreover~, even if Dimitar-san loses control of himself and attacks Valeria-sama, I can tear you off by force~」

「...Though you had read into things to that extent, your role setting is probably to carry luggage only」

He heard that this time was a top secret mission with their social statuses concealed. If only it wasn't for the wilfulness of that demanding Dominas-sama, he didn't want to bring along such a really suspicious pink armoured girl. In the first place, this kind of person usually became a hindrance.

When Dimitar who had a fed up look kept the wiped Jagieruka in its scabbard, Bettina spoke again.

「Dimitar-san, Dimitar-saan」

「...You're annoying. What's the matter now?」

「I'm sorry, b, but can you take one cartridge from over there—?」

When he looked, Bettina had fallen over beside the pile of wooden boxes unnoticed. She didn't even move with a “pikuri (*twitch*)” while lying down.

Dimitar approached the girl and casually poked her with his toe.

「Oi, what's it? Are you having a seizure of something?」

「N, no, it's just that the magic power ran out desu...q, quickly, the cartridge over there...aaah! I, it seems to be leaking desuu...!」

「Wait a minute! What are you saying all of a sudden!?」

「I, I'm sorry! But isn't it obvious that I mean pee when I said it's leaking! U, ura, please don't make a young girl say p, p, pee many times!」

「Don't put the blame on others. —To begin with, it'll be fine if you take off the armour quickly and run to the toilet」

「I, i, it's impossible desuu! In the current state where the magic power is cut off, I, I can't take this off by myself desuyou! Ububububu, i, it's leaking outtttt...!」

「If it's leaking out, then let it leaks out as you like. I'm going back」

「So heartless~! Aren't we comrades who'll be travelling together after this!」

「I don't need a comrade who's incontinent and can't move from running out of magic power frequently」

When Dimitar had said so and was about to leave, a middle-aged man wearing a slightly dirty white robe entered.

「Oi, I haven't finished my explanation. Don't leave of your own accord」

「What'll you be explaining at this late hour? If it's about your niece having weak urethral sphincters, then I've fully understood that already」

「Ha? What a vulgar and impolite fellow」

Quique Albiol glanced at Bettina who was on the floor moaning 「It's leaking, it's leaking outttt!」 continuously, and picked up a

metallic cylindrical object that was lined up on the corner of the shelf.

「As you know, this Bachururus!」

「Don't readily decide that I know it!」

「An?」

「I don't know anything. What's Bachururus?」

「I, it's this magic motion armour desu!」

The girl inside the armour answered.

「I, I'm the one who named it! Don't you think it's cute!?」

「Ah—, it's cute, it's cute!」

「B, by the way, I named Dimitar-san's Jagieruka too desu! Ah, i, it seems to be really leaking!」

「Then stop your needless chatter!」

Kicking the girl who was talkative despite being at her wits' end lightly, Dimitar sat on his chair again.

「—So, is something wrong with that Bachururus?」

「Using the magic power contained inside this cartridge, this thing can amplify a person's strength rapidly. Though it looks very small, it can match ten adult men if it's just simply power. —But if the cartridge becomes empty, it's similar to ordinary heavy armour and a narrow coffin!」

When Albiol squatted at Bettina's back and opened the lid of a box at the armour's back, he extracted a cylindrical cartridge and in return, stuffed in the cartridge that he had fetched from the shelf a while ago.

「With this, it's done. —If the cartridge becomes empty at your

destination, you can replace it like this」

「Me?」

「Is there someone else? Surely you aren't making Dominas-sama do it, are you?」

「I also have the option of not taking her along from the start」

「You can't do that!」

Bettina, who had stood up suddenly, waved her short arms and emphasised that while stamping restlessly with a “gacha gacha” on the spot.

「I'm also Valeria-sama's guard at the same time, so—aaaah, i, it's leaking! It's leakinggg!」

「Never mind that, go let out whatever you need to let out first」

「E, excuse me!」

Dragging along noisy footsteps of “gacho gacho”, Bettina withdrew into the workshop's interior. Albiol who had saw her off smoked the khsier with a “pukari” and,

「Ma, though Bettina certainly has to go to the toilet often, that power will definitely be useful. I want you to retrieve data together with Jagieruka. ...You can't prepare a carriage and have an elegant journey for this time's mission, right?」

「It'd be good if that Ojou-sama is aware of that but—」

Shouldering the luggage, Dimitar hung Jagieruka's scabbard on his waist.

「—I'll be going ahead so please tell her to hurry」

「All right. —Ma, since it's the new Dominas's first job, I doubt it'll become a development which you've to be concerned about very

much, but be careful just in case, okay?」

Albiol blew out white smokes at Dimitar who was facing the door.

「I know. I'll make it successful to the utmost」

Nodding curtly, Dimitar left the workshop.

When looking at the castle's belfry, there weren't more than thirty minutes until the departure time. He wanted to greet Lucius with a few words, but unfortunately, there didn't seem to be time for that.

Dimitar, who had turned up in front of the magic academy's gate while brushing his nape, noticed a girl who was leaning against the door with a really irritated look and frowned.

「Oi, you」

「Ah!」

When Dimitar called out to her rudely, Valeria Costacurta brandished her treasured sword for ceremonial use, including its scabbard, which she was holding and screamed.

「Hey! You've kept me waiting in some way! Aren't you lacking the self-awareness of a Hiera Glaphicos!? I'll report this matter to the director afterwards without fail—」

「You're being noisy」

Thrusting his little finger into his ear, Dimitar interrupted Valeria's words.

「I think there are still close to thirty minutes until the departure time. You're the one who came too early so don't rebuke those that came later for being late. ...More than that, are you really planning to travel in that appearance?」

「Ha? What's it? Do you've a complaint or something?」

Valeria was wearing a tabard which was a white cloth bordered with golden threads and had embroidery of lilies on it. It was a uniform of Redountra's wives bestowed from the king, and only this country's Dominas were allowed to wear them.

Dimitar rolled up her tabard's hem with a "pirari" using the tip of Jagieruka's scabbard. Underneath it was a thin dress that looked amply transparent, and furthermore, below it was a combination of bustier and hot-pants.

「! W, what are you doing, this shameless man!」

Valeria's face became a deep red and she jumped back.

「Are you an idiot?」

「Like I said, what's wrong with you since just now!?」

「You...were you not told that this time's mission is an absolute secret?」

「W, what about it?」

「It'd be immediately exposed that you're a Dominas with that appearance of yours. If you leave the castle town like that, you'll be swarmed by curious onlookers in the blink of an eye, you know?」

「Ah」

「Good grief...you really did the things that I had thought you wouldn't do. This's why I can't handle those ignorant of the ways of the world」

「I, it can't be helped, right! It's my first time going out for a mission after all!」

「It's also my first time as a Hiera Glaphicos. —Wait just a minute」

Sighing exaggeratedly, Dimitar headed for the magic academy's stable. Unlike the army, the magic academy hardly needed a large

quantity of horses, but nonetheless, it always reared several horses for communication purpose.

When Dimitar had pulled out two horses with seemingly strong build from the stable and returned to Valeria, he offered a shabby mantle hanging on the saddle to the girl.

「Put this on」

「Ha? Are you joking? Why do I've to wear such a dirty mantle—」

「It isn't dirty. It's brand new despite how it looks. Anyway, hide that tabard. We can't carry out the secret mission if you're in such a conspicuous and sparkling appearance. And put away that treasured sword」

「B, but, as a Dominas, this's my—」

「You're noisy. Your pride and Dominas's status are inconsequential now. Completing the mission takes priority」

Silencing the mumbling Valeria, Dimitar threw the mantle over to her.

「Dimitar-saan!」

A small pink iron person ran here accompanied by vigorous footsteps of “gacha gacha”. It was shouldering luggage which were close to twice of its physique on its back. It didn't seem to be wholly a lie that its power alone was that of ten adult men's.

「I'm sorry for being late!」

Bettina saluted Dimitar with a “bishiri”, faced Valeria who was holding the mantle and staring in puzzlement, and bowed very deeply.

「It's an honour to meet you, Valeria-sama!」

「Ah, haa...」

「I'm the kingdom army's third arsenal's Chief Engineer Quique Albiol's niece, Bettina Albiol desu~! It has been decided that I'll be accompanying you on the mission as Valeria-sama's attendant this time! Please treat me well!」

「I, I certainly did request for a female attendant, but are you the one...?」

「Hai! From every day's chores to guarding, please leave all of them to this Bettina!」

「You...are you really a girl?」

When Valeria asked doubtfully, Bettina stamped her feet in indignation.

「Why's everyone saying such a thing?! No matter how you look, I'm a girl; an energetic thirteen-year-old! Hora hora, you can understand it with this voice, right!?!」

「Setting aside whether she's energetic or not, the topic of her being that eccentric Chief Engineer's niece is true. She also has great physical power, so she can be a porter at least, I think」

Dimitar cut into the conversation and pulled another piece of mantle over Bettina's head.

「You put this on too. ...It's pointless to say this now, but why was it (*Bachu*) painted in such conspicuous colour again? That Ossan (*middle-aged man*)?」



「You're wrong, the one who painted Bachururus pink was this me of course desu! It's because pink is cute!」

「.....」

Ignoring the answer that he could anticipate midway, Dimitar fastened his and Valeria's luggage onto the horse's saddle.

「Oi, Your Eminence-sama」

Dimitar asked Valeria who had worn the mantle on her tabard in a way that seemed really reluctant.

「Have you ridden a horse?」

「H, how rude! I've experience in riding a horse! Who do you think I am!?」

「If you said it to that extent, then you're okay with riding continuously for around five, six hours, right?」

「Eh!?」

「What's there to be surprised about? This time's mission is an absolute secret, thus swiftness is required. It's decided that we'll rushed at full speed after leaving the town」

「T, that's...」

Valeria averted her eyes and restlessly pressed down the sides of her bottom. Dimitar knitted his eyebrows and clicked his tongue.

「...Though you said you've the experience, you're a beginner, huh? You rode a horse and the skin on your crotch got peeled off, right?」

「W, what crotch! How vulgar! You're absolutely wrong! The skin on my bottom got slightly, just slightly peeled off only!」

「So you haven't ridden on a horse since then?」

「U—」

Apparently, he had hit the mark. As things stood, it'd be impossible to let Valeria take the reins and travel a long distance.

「Oi, armour」

「Dimitar-san, we aren't total strangers~, so please stop that lukewarm way of calling me. My name is Bettina desu」

The pink armour that had fastened the luggage it was shouldering onto another horse refuted Dimitar's call. Although the helmet had slits, due to it covering her full face, the girl's expression was completely hidden.

「Calling a girl who can't show her face to people and make a proper greeting as "armour" is enough. —More than that, can you ride a horse in that state?」

「Ah, there's no need to worry about me desuyou」

Hitting her chest with a "gachan", Bettina replied proudly.

「Despite this, I can run at roughly the same speed as the horse」

「I wasn't worried but...is that true?」

「Hai! I can run continuously without supply for about half a day desuyou. What's more, I'll hardly get tired! It's amazing, right, Oji-sama's invention!」

「I'll have you show me whether it's really amazing or not after this. ...In that case, load that horse with luggage only; you'll take its reins and run alongside it. We'll change when our horse become exhausted. We can shorten the time considerably with that」

「Eh? Wait a minute, what did you say just now? Our horse? Our?」

「If you're feeling bitter, blame yourself who's a beginner at horse riding」

Dimitar put his foot on the stirrup and straddled the horse agilely. He then wrapped his extended right arm around Valeria's waist and placed her on the saddle lightly.

「Wait a min...!」

「Spread this out and sit sideways. With this, you can somehow prevent the skin of your crotch from peeling off」

「It's not crotch but bottom, bottom!」

「Openly shouting “crotch” and “bottom” in a loud voice in broad daylight, the new Dominas-sama is surprisingly straightforward. It seems like you'll be popular with the people」

「Gu...!」

When Valeria who had blushed again spread out the pelt used for protection against the cold as a cushion, she shut her mouth on that note and faced away.

Dimitar shrugged his shoulders lightly and looked back at Bettina.

「...Let's go, armour」

「It's Bettina desuyou」

「Whatever」

Dimitar snapped the reins and they set off on the horse.

◆◆◆

When Lucius Richternach, who had finished his boring desk work and returned to the mansion, just finished changing into comfortable clothes, he had to receive an unexpected visitor.

「—Costacurta? ...So that means Valeria-jou's?」

「It seems to be her father」

Thial who had been working in this mansion since she was a child answered in an indifferent tone that seemed somewhat displeased. However, Lucius who was like a childhood friend knew it well that this girl was just a little too serious, and that she wasn't actually displeased.

Lucius, who had put on a gown and took a breath, tilted his head to the side and muttered.

「I think Haha-ue is probably staying at the magic academy tonight too but—」

「I've told him that Orvieto-sama is absent, but he said that he'd like to convey a message to her son if that was the case...」

「I think I somehow know his intention for the visit but...oh well, let him in」

「Hai」

Lucius did up his long silver hair which he had begun to take down again and went towards the parlour.

Lucius was the head of this house during his mother's absence, and he mustn't be coarse to visitors. Ordering the other maids to prepare wine, he waited for Thial to guide Costacurta-kyou here.

「—Lu, Lucius-dono!!」

Accompanied by Thial, Borha Costacurta appeared shortly and shouted vigorously in an awfully panic state.

「My daughter! Daughter! My! My Costacurta House's!」

「Costacurta-kyou, please calm down...」

While smiling bitterly at the middle-aged man who was too panicky and couldn't transmit whatever he was saying at all, Lucius offered the sofa to Borha.

「Well, in any case—」

「T, thank you...」

Appeasing his thirst with the wine that was prepared on the table, and perhaps he had finally felt relaxed because of it, Borha sighed with a “fu—” and sat on the sofa.

「Good gracious, I've showed you a terrible side of me...」

「Not at all, I don't mind. —By the way, I want to ask something but, um...the plaster that's sticking conspicuously on your head is—」

「T, this's um...no, I'll explain it gradually」

「Is that so? —Then, exactly what sort of business do you have for my mother at such time? Mother is preoccupied with the magic academy's matters for a while, and I don't know when she'll return home」

「If I can't meet with the Head Director, then I already have no one else to rely on other than Lucius-dono!」

Avoiding the spot where the plaster was stuck on and wiping the sweat on his head, Borha leaned forward.

「Judging from what you said just now...is it something about Ojou-sama?」

「Indeed! It's about my daughter, Valeria! Do Lucius-dono not know where my daughter has gone to?」

「Where...meaning?」

「She left the mansion early this morning and went somewhere! If she was somehow given a strictly confidential mission by the Head Director, then—」

「Top secret mission, is it?」

Lucius folded his arms and nodded slightly.

「—Orvieto is certainly my mother, but when separating from our positions as individuals, she's the Royal Magic Academy's head director, and I'm the Seal Chivalric Order's vice-leader. There are things that we can't tell each other even if the other party is a blood relative. Unfortunately, it's the first time I'm hearing this talk of such a mission being given to Ojou-sama. I also don't know where Ojou-sama went」

「N, no way....!」

「Ojou-sama didn't say anything to you?」

「T, that's right! She persisted that it was a top secret mission, and when I tried to detain her, she used magic of all things on me—」

「She used magic on you?」

「Ah, no, not directly. On the garden tree's branch; like..."shupa!" and the severed branch fell onto my head...」

「I see」

Borha Costacurta asserted that he received a direct hit on the crown of his head and lost consciousness. It was already sunset when he recovered consciousness, and his daughter had departed long ago.

Lucius endured from almost smiling unintentionally and calmed Borha down.

「By all rights, she should refrain from telling you the fact of her being given a top secret mission. Isn't informing you of it her minimal consideration towards you?」

「If she really had that consideration, shouldn't she feel reluctant from her father's words and give up on departing!? M, much less, I was lying unconscious at that time, you know!？」

「But in that case, she'd be disobeying the command from the magic academy. She won't be able to do that with her position as the new Dominas. Wasn't becoming a Dominas Ojou-sama's dream from before?」

「I understand that but...」

Saying so, Borha emptied the wine glass again. It wasn't a very strong wine, but his pace was a little too fast, and a grumble might come out shortly.

「I sympathised with your anxiety but...being chosen as a Dominas meant that she was deemed to have that much power. Not to mention, I happened to hear that Ojou-sama has an innate talent that's once in ten years?」

「Even if you said that, Valeria is still a child, a mere young girl!」

「It's because she has that much talent at a young age that she could become a Dominas. Or are you dissatisfied with something at Ojou-sama becoming a Dominas?」

「T, that's—」

Borha stopped his hand that was holding the wine glass and looked at Lucius with upturned eyes.

「—Thial」

「Hai」

「Please withdraw for a while」

「Hai」

Thial, who had been offering wine right after Borha drank it, bowed deeply and left the parlour. Borha heard the solemn sound of the door closing from behind and spoke in a low voice.

「...Frankly speaking, I didn't want my daughter to become a

Dominas. I want her to take a good husband from somewhere and give birth to a successor even if it's this instant】

「If I remember correctly, your child is—」

「It's only Valeria, since her mother's constitution was frail...」

Although it had temporarily fallen, the Costacurta House was an old family that had relations with the royal family. It was extremely natural for him to rack his brains at the successor issue for the sake of passing down that pedigree to future generations. Lucius was no exception either. As the only son of Orvieto, he must take a wife eventually and produce a successor to the Richternach House.

「I've heard that Dominas's duty is usually for about nine years. Valeria will be twenty-five already when she finishes it. Not to mention, it's really bad for my daughter's reputation that her exclusive Hiera Glaphicos is still a young man」

「It's about that then...」

「Lucius-dono」

Borha put down the glass and his lips quivered.

「—I heard that this human resources are sponsorship of the Head Director; moreover, is that Hiera Glaphicos not a person of the Richternach House?」

「Yes. He's called Dimitar」

「”If I'm unable to dissuade my daughter, at least get her a Hiera Glaphicos who's able to protect her.” It was I who made that kind of request, and I think it's very rude of me to say this sort of thing to Lucius-dono but...」

「I don't mind. What's it?」

「That Dimitar...I didn't hear very good rumours of him」

「They're rumours to the end, aren't they?」

Lucius smiled at Borha who had a sombre expression.

「Dimitar—, Dii is a well-balanced man who doesn't suit his age. He has a strong sense of responsibility, is honest, and capable as a swordsman and magic warrior. He's the most suitable talent as a bodyguard」

「B, but—!」

「He certainly has a spiteful mouth. Owing to that, he has many enemies and there are bad rumours like those you've heard circulating. —Nevertheless, I told him to protect Valeria-jou no matter what happens immediately after he was appointed as a Hiera Glaphicos. That's what I said」

「Ha...?」

Perhaps he couldn't comprehend the meaning behind Lucius's words, Borha frowned quizzically.

「—I said to protect Valeria-jou, and Dii also acknowledged it. That being the case, Dii will protect Valeria-jou even if he dies. He's that sort of person. It's impossible for him to lay his hands on Valeria-jou. I've said so after all」

Repeating verbosely, Lucius was aware that he had been smiling faintly.

However, Borha's expression was still clouded over. For a father who was prone to worrying and knew completely nothing on what kind of person Dimitar was, it might be natural that he couldn't accept the things that Lucius had said.

「...Costacurta-kyou, can't you trust me who has faith in him?」

「Mu...s, since Lucius-dono is saying it to that extent...」

「Please be at ease」

Lucius didn't miss the chance where Borha wavered and pressed for an answer without a moment's delay.

「Regarding Ojou-sama's mission, I'll try to investigate a little on my side too. Moreover, I intend to take measures accordingly if some problems occur」

「Lucius-dono will?」

「Yes. After all, Ojou-sama and I aren't total strangers, and this's also the first job of Dimitar who's just like a younger brother」

「Hearing that...ah, I feel relieved at last」

Dropping his large bottom that had begun to hover from the sofa with a "dosun", Borha sighed.

「If Lucius-dono is taking responsibility to that extent, I won't say any further now. —I'm sorry for coming late at night」

「Not at all, please don't worry about it」

Convinced that it was the last drink, Lucius personally filled Borha's glass with wine.

「...Then I'll leave with this」

Borha emptied his glass and left the Richternach's house in a very calm state that was contrary to when he arrived.

「Yare yare...seems that even Valeria-jou can't help but feel irritated by that」

When Lucius, who had lean his body on the sofa again, held the bottle against the light and checked the remaining amount of wine, he put his mouth directly on it and tried to drink up as it was.

「Bocchanma (*young master*)」

「—Tto」

「Costacurta-sama has went back」

「Ah, I see」

「And there's one more thing」

「Is there something else?」

「Please don't imitate Dimitar-sama's behaviour」

「I think this much is fine though. During expedition, those guys from the Chivalric Order also—」

「This place isn't an expedition, but inside the mansion」

Thial snatched the wine bottle from Lucius's hand with a "hyoi" and poured its contents into a newly prepared glass.

「—Please have this」

「I thought of decreasing your labour even if it's a little」

Shrugging his shoulders lightly and gulping down the glass, Lucius looked out of the window.

「—This Seriba's matter will probably be officially reported to the imperial court's people tomorrow. There may be disorder for a while」

「Will the Chivalric Order depart for the front-line—?」

「No, that won't happen. The Seal Chivalric Order's mission is ultimately the protection of the seal. In the first place, it's impossible for the Chivalric Order of only young nobles who are decorations to suppress the rebellion. —But that being said, they probably won't stand by idly. At the very least, I won't」

「Acknowledged. That shall be so」

When Thial withdrew, Lucius tied up the front of his gown and stood by the window.

「At any rate...setting aside Haha-ue, what kind of expectation does His Highness has to send in those two?」

◆◆◆

Making the horses run with all their might on highways which were scarce of signs of life, and reducing their speed to be inconspicuous at places with public gazes, Valeria and party headed earnestly towards the south. The sun had already inclined to the west, and the hint of nightfall was drawing closer unnoticed.

Valeria was jolted excessively by the horse for a long period of time and her bottom had become quite sore. She then dismounted the horse at a side with numerous people coming and going, and began to walk while relaxing her entire stiffened body.

「By the way, what kind of place is Seriba?」

「...Did you not investigate this much beforehand, genius Valeria-jou?」

Dimitar sent a cold look from atop the horse.

「There was no time!」

「There should have been one night」

「Rather, why are you riding the horse proudly when I'm walking!?」

「I didn't ask you to dismount the horse. You got off of your own accord」

Nonetheless, Dimitar, who had faced away and spat out, dismounted the horse while clicking his tongue, pulled the reins and started to walk. Including Bettina who was similarly pulling the horse

and following right behind, they looked like a trio on a journey from an outsider's perspective.

Surveying the surroundings, Dimitar began to speak softly.

「...Seriba is a town that's near the southern national border. It seems to be a gloomy countryside that doesn't have a magic academy's branch」

「Did a um...rebellion really occur at such a carefree place?」

「It became an uproar because it occurred, right?」

「But—」

「Seriba is a small town, but when crossing over the mountains, it's already Bigerou's sphere of influence」

The southern barbaric country, Bigerou, believed in countless number of foreign gods. Religion-wise, it was like an eternal disagreeable arch-enemy to Amaddo that personally assumed the core of Redountra's religion. In fact, it wasn't once or twice that both countries had gone to war in just the ten-odd years after Valeria was born.

「Then, this time's rebellion is...?」

「There's the possibility of it being Bigerou's scheme」

Valeria trembled slightly from Dimitar's nonchalant words.

「...Are you scared?」

「I, I'm not scared!」

Feeling that she was looked down on by Dimitar, Valeria refuted immediately.

「This me isn't scared of something like barbaric believers!」

「Eh~? Valeria-sama isn't scared~?」

Bettina spoke from beyond the helmet.

「I haven't meet the barbaric believers desuyou. However, I can't help but feel scared when I heard the barbaric believers' deeds desu~」

「N, now that you said it, I also have yet to meet the barbaric believers...but as long as you've faith towards God, no matter what kind of enemy the opponent is, there's no need to be scared」

「It's wonderful that you're reliable, but I'll be troubled if you act rashly. It'll be helpful if you feel frightened a little at least」

「Look here, I'm—」

“Amaddo's next Dominas, Valeria Costacurta!” She shut her mouth hurriedly as she was about to say that. Perhaps they were close to a town; there were many groups of people in travelling clothes and figures of farmers in the vicinity. It'd become a commotion if Valeria's true identity was exposed in such a place.

Dimitar smiled broadly and gazed forward.

「...We're almost at Cromatan town. We'll rest there and depart before daybreak tomorrow. We should be able to cover quite a distance with that」

「W, we'll depart before daybreak and travel continuously the whole time!?!」

「Why are you making a despairing face? It's the horse that's running continuously, not you. It's easy since you just have to sit on it」

「It's pretty tiring even if it's just sitting on it!」

「That's why, rest sufficiently tonight」

At that moment, the tolls of a bell could be heard from a distance.

If they looked, a deep black silhouette of a small town rose on the other side of the highway.

「Can you hear the tolls of a bell—?」

「Ah, it's sunset very soon. The town's gates are closing shortly」

「I, is that so? Why?」

「To prevent thieves and the likes from trespassing under the cover of darkness. ...But as expected of Valeria-jou who's ignorant of the ways of the world. This rule should be the same even in Roma, but you're completely unaware of it」

「Gu...!」

It was inevitable for Valeria who was brought up as a noble's daughter to be a little ignorant of the commoners' general knowledge, but saying that would be akin to admitting her lack of knowledge, and Valeria could only bite on her lips.

Bettina tugged at the edge of Dimitar's mantle and,

「Dimitar-san, Dimitar-san! It'd be bad if we don't hurry desuyou!」

「Don't be impatient. There's still time until sunset」

Valeria felt assured—though she was annoyed—by that way of speaking that seemed to be used to travelling.

「R, Richternach-kyou, um...well, are you accustomed to...um travelling?」

「That's not the case, but I was made to do various things when I was a Seal Chivalric Order's apprentice」

「Army's expeditions?」

「Unlike a normal army, that place is like a club of noble buddies. Even if they go afar on a manoeuvre, they never camp out at night.」

They'll reserve the best inn in the town of their destination, spend their money lavishly and fool around throughout the night. Speaking of manoeuvre, though it has a nice ring to it, it's actually just a pleasure trip. ...Thus, apprentices like me are naturally made to do the trivial tasks」

A bitter smile that didn't yearn for such a past and yet also didn't detest it coloured the expression of Dimitar who had said so; it was a bitter smile that was by no means easy to read into the depth of his feelings.

「Ha—...we made it somehow」

Bettina, who was able to enter Cromatan town before its gates closed, creaked her pink armour with a “gachi gachi” under the mantle and let out a sigh of relief with a “ho”.

That place which Valeria, who practically didn't go out of the Holy City, saw for the first time was an extremely disordered town.

Perhaps they were along the highway that ran north and south that people with merchant appearances taking along horse-loads and numerous travellers dressed in mantles like Valeria could be seen. There were also obviously foreigners among them judging by the colour of their skins. The hustle and bustle and various odours of those diverse people in the dusk of sunset intermingled and created a peculiar atmosphere.

Taking out a handkerchief and pressing it onto the tip of her nose, Valeria asked while looking around the surroundings.

「This's inconsequential, but where are we staying at tonight? I can't sleep unless it's a proper bed, you know?」

「Don't ask for the extravagance. You think we can stay at Tabard Inn and the like when we're travelling incognito?」

「Tabard Inn? What's that?」

「Ah, I know」

While pulling the horse and walking on the main street, Bettina explained to Valeria.

「Tabard Inn is a top class inn where people wearing tabards—in other words, Dominas-sama, the country's special envoy and high ranking noble-sama lodge in. Right, Dimitar-san?」

「N? —Yeah, maa something like that」

Dimitar was looking around restlessly as if he was searching for something and didn't seem to be interested in the girls' conversation.

「Then what shall we do when we can't stay at such a place?」

「If you dislike sleeping outdoors, there's no choice but to compromise with an average grade (グレード) inn」

「Average grade?」

Dimitar stopped his feet and pointed diagonally upwards. A signboard carved with a design of a grape and an ivy intertwining dangled from the wall of a large three-storey building.

「Here? This place is an inn?」

Valeria peered inside from the door that was left open, but it wasn't an inn no matter how she thought. Looking from Valeria's view, it was a bar in the outskirts which she had heard in talks, and didn't seem like a place where a young maiden could get a peaceful night at all.

「The grape signboard indicates that it's a bar that serves wine」

「As I thought, this isn't an inn but a bar!」

Valeria frowned at the strong scent of alcohol that drifted to her face and glared at Dimitar.

「You truly are an Ojou-sama who's ignorant of the ways of the world, Valeria-jou. —If it's the grade of this area, then it's natural for bars to serve as inns. Remember that」

Dimitar looked at the inn's exterior again and put his hand on his chin.

「...Judging from its appearance, this place seems to be quite a big inn even in this town and also has lots of rooms. It seems to have a stable too. We probably won't find a better inn than this」

「Ah—, hai hai, Richternach-kyou can understand everything just like that」

「It's just that I know more about the world than you. ...And you, if you've the time to throw sarcasm at me, then try not to stand out a bit more」

Once again lowering Valeria's hood that she had voluntarily lifted up, Dimitar spoke.

「—There may not be people who know you around here, but looking at it from another perspective, there also may not be people who'll hold back due to reasons such as you being a Dominas-sama or a person of the Costacurta House」

「Eh...?」

「In this world, there are many fellows who try to snatch good women and girls who seem saleable without hesitation when they see them. Bear this in mind well」

「—」

「Di, Dimitar-saan! Please don't scared us so much!」

「You're safe. You won't be abducted since your armour is heavy」

Coldly pushing Bettina away, Dimitar entered the bar.

Valeria, who was left outside shuddered slightly at Dimitar's words, but perhaps noticing it, Bettina grabbed the edge of her mantle and pulled lightly.

「—Valeria-sama」

「Eh? W, what?」

「If you feel uneasy when going out, shall I ask Oji-sama to make another set of Bachururus next time? It seems like you won't be abducted if you wear this desuyou」

「...If I wear that, I can't use magic at the critical moment」

Using her fist to knock on the slits' section of Bettina's helmet with a "kon kon", Valeria smiled wryly and weakly.

Dimitar who had returned at once was accompanied by the inn's proprietress and several men.

「Our departure is before daybreak tomorrow. Please feed the horses plenty of stock」

While Valeria was idling, Dimitar entrusted the horses to the men and moved on to the negotiation of the inn charges with the proprietress. Not forgetting to tip both parties was probably necessary for the journey to be carried out smoothly. Although she was often annoyed by various things, Valeria finally came to realise that the assistance of this boy who was a complete realist was indispensable in order to finish this time's mission.

「Dimitar-san is amazing desuu. He's reliable as expected!」

「...I guess so」

After nodding unintentionally, Valeria frowned at her slight sense of defeat.

「Oi, this way」

When Dimitar, who had concluded his talk with the proprietress, let Bettina shoulder half of the luggage and carried the remaining on his back, he prompted the girls and entered the inn.

The bar's atmosphere on the first floor was honestly the worst for Valeria. The smell of cheap alcohol and tobacco, and above all, the sweats' odours of the men who had worked throughout the day mixed together. It seemed like she'd become sick if she stayed in such a place for a long time.

「Rejoice. Only one of the best rooms is vacant」

A condescending Dimitar guided the pair to a room on the third floor.

「...This's the best room?」

Looking around the room, Valeria muttered. Although it didn't have the bad atmosphere like the bar below, it was only as spacious as the four-person room used by the Costacurta House's servants and was awfully bleak with just two simple beds, a table and also a chair placed inside. Even if it was called the best room of the best inn in town, she couldn't believe it offhandedly.

「If you like, shall I let you take a quick look at the other rooms?」

Putting the luggage at the corner of the room, Dimitar sighed.

「—The sizes of the other rooms aren't even half of this. On top of that, the beds are just straws covered with sheets, and they've a lodging system whereby five to six people are welcomed to sleep together in a huddle」

「...I'll decline」

「A wise judgement typical of the genius Valeria-jou」

Stabbing her once with a prickling sarcasm, Dimitar put breads, cheese, sausages and also a leather bag of wine on the table.

「Oi, Gacha Pink」

「It's Bettina desuyou. ...It's better than being called "armour" though」

「That doesn't matter. ...Is it fine not to replace your cartridge?」

「It's still all right desu~」

「Is that so? —I've said this just now, but we're departing before daybreak tomorrow. Finish your meals quickly and rest early」

Seeing Dimitar who had said just that and was about to leave the room, Valeria who had been folding the mantle stared in wonder.

「Hey, where are you going?」

「I can't rest here, can I?」

「Did you obtain another room?」

「Unfortunately, it seems like there are no other rooms available. But since I'm a man, no matter where it may be, it's fine if I can lay down」

Placing his hand on the knob, Dimitar spoke over his shoulder.

「Rather than worrying about people, you guys better rest properly. It's troubling for me if you collapse from lack of sleep」

「I, I'm not worried about you in particular!」

「I guess so. ...Do secure the lock properly」

Having said so, Dimitar disappeared from the front of Valeria.

In accordance to what she was told, Bettina secured the lock from inside the room and,

「Will Dimitar-san be all right...?」

「Won't he be fine since the person himself had said so?」

Valeria shook her head slightly and took off her tabard after the mantle. When she had folded it neatly and put it on top of the luggage, she jumped onto the bed vigorously with a "pon". Sure enough, there was a great difference in softness compared to the bed which Valeria usually used, but it wasn't to the extent where she couldn't sleep. Thinking that it might be preferable to sleeping outdoors, she stretched greatly.

「—Then Valeria-sama, let's eat」

「Even if you say these are food...」

Valeria, who had moved to the chair and picked up the bread, brought her eyebrows together at its hardness. Even the baked bread from this morning might not be hard to this extent.

For Valeria who had been brought up as a noble, it was unbelievable that a meal consisted of hard bread, a lump of cheese and sausages only.

「Isn't there something warmer? Like vegetable soup or roasted chicken?」

「That's impossible desuyou」

Handling a knife skilfully with her armour-covered hand, Bettina began to slice the hard bread thinly.

「In this sort of inn, they don't carry your meals to your room. If you want to eat warm cooking, I think there's no choice but to pay extra charge at the bar below~, but that's impossible for us today desuyou」

「Eating at such a place is impossible even if this isn't a top secret mission」

「Ah, that's right!」

Bettina spoke as if she had suddenly thought of an idea.

「Please toast this bread or cheese at least」

「Haa!?」

「Like I said, it's a piece of cake, hora, with magic!」

「Look here—」

Valeria was a Dominas. There were only twelve of them in the whole continent no matter which era it was, and she was one of the only three Dominas in Amaddo. Using the magic of that Dominas to toast a hard bread of all things was a remark that lacked too much respect. Even if she took into consideration of Bettina being a young child and her innocence, she ought to say a few words here.

「Listen, okay? I'm a Dominas who serves God—」

「I heard that Valeria-sama's magic talent is outstanding even among this time's Dominas candidates~. For me who doesn't have magic talent, I can't help but feel envious desuu」

The eyes of Bettina who had interrupted Valeria's speech and said so—though her face naturally wasn't visible because of the helmet—were probably sparkling with a “kira kira” for sure.

Having heard that, Valeria suddenly felt good.

「I, it can't be helped then...」

When Valeria cleared her throat a little, she raised her index finger with a “pin”.

「—」

When Valeria concentrated her mind slightly, a red magic crest appeared on the back of her hand. If it was a magic of the degree to weave a small flame, a complex magic crest was unnecessary. Precise and complex magic crests were closely packed in high density and

carved onto Valeria's whole body. The magic crest which was excited to cause a flame might not even reach one percent of its entirety.

「Amazing desuu~♪」

Bettina whose applause produced metallic sounds of "gachan gachan" promptly began to hold the bread that was stabbed with the knife over the flame on Valeria's fingertip.

「This's surely God's blessing; wisdom that was bestowed onto us humans by God desunee」

「I suppose so」

「But why are there humans who can use magic and those who can't?」

Valeria couldn't reply immediately to the naive question of Bettina who was putting the melted cheese onto the well-baked bread and making a delicious-looking cheese toast.

Magic was a technique thought out by God to seal evil and was something that He bequeathed to humans. —Or so Valeria had been taught. She also learnt that only people who held faith in God could use it.

But in reality, only one in ten people could use magic. Valeria and Dimitar were that one-tenth, while Bettina was someone who belonged to the nine-tenth. Even when taking just this kingdom into consideration, in spite of almost all its citizens being devout believers of the Redountra's religion, the majority couldn't use magic.

Even Valeria didn't understand why the difference existed.

「Maa, enough of the minor details. They're trivialities」

Valeria shrugged her shoulders while eating the cheese toast with a "mogu mogu".

Although Valeria was said to possess an innate talent, she was weak at thinking about theoretical and notional matters. Her friend, Karin, had said 「Your talent is wild」, and in fact, Valeria was the type who didn't think about one difficult thing or another in her head and handled magic with her feelings.

Hence, although Valeria regarded herself as a genius a little, it wasn't due to her being humble or whatsoever, but that she really didn't understand the subtle reason.

「Hey, isn't this wine sour?」

Gulping down a shabby wooden cup filled with wine, Valeria tilted her head to the side. She felt that the wine which she was treated to at Orvieto's place yesterday was more delicious.

「It seems somewhat old, but this quality is something that the commoners usually drink」

Raising the visor slightly, Bettina answered while eating the toast that was inserted into her helmet via that opening.

「—Since my Oji-sama is someone who loves alcohol, he'll always buy new brew of wine. But usually, he'll mix sugar and pepper to cheap and sour ones and drink them desuyou」

「Fuun」

Even Bettina who was much younger than her was well-informed in this or that worldly matter. Conversely, Valeria was made to realise how ignorant she was of the various things of the world on just the first day today.

However, if she had to say what surprised her the most, then it was the fact that eating a meal with someone like this—even if the food was simple and couldn't be compared to her own home's—felt like it was tasty and enjoyable beyond her expectations. When she thought about it, it was because she mostly ate alone in the mansion.

「.....」

Valeria suddenly wondered where Dimitar was and what he was doing now.

If it was that young man, he was probably eating silently, like washing down the hard bread with sour wine without saying if it was delicious or unappetising.

When she imagined such a thing, she ended up burning a piece of bread into cinders.

Chapter 03 - Sorcery

Amaddo was a country that was split by the central plains of the warm continent, Bekus. It was a verdant agricultural country that had extensive cultivated lands and pastures, and its populace's dissatisfaction from matters which were unrelated to famine was scarce; in general, its public order was good.

It didn't have a sea as it was a landlocked country, but because its political situation was stable for a long time, the maintenance of its domestic highways had been progressing since olden days, and thus its trade by land routes was prosperous.

Possessing a powerful standing army which was backed by its blessed economic strength was also an aspect that sustained Amaddo's status as the leader of the "**Holy Alliance (*Furigana: Riga Santourear*)**".



A large country of barbaric believers, Bigerou, existed on the south of Amaddo. However, an all-out war had never happened once so far as a precipitous mountain range stretched out between both countries, though there had been skirmishes on countless occasions.

「Valeria-sama is just like Dimitar-san. You've been constantly yawning since some time ago」

「...I can't help it since I couldn't sleep well」

Valeria stifled a big yawn and averted the gaze of Bettina whose spirit was high since before daybreak. Although Valeria was also often told by Karin that she was pointlessly high-spirited, she was far quieter when compared to this pink armour—or so she thought.

Where on earth did he sleep last night? Dimitar, who came to wake Valeria with a rude knock just around thirty minutes ago, pulled out the horses which were entrusted to the inn and prepared for departure without showing the fatigue from yesterday's forced march a bit.

「Doesn't matter」

Dimitar placed a pail in front of the horses, looked down at Bettina with a "fu", and beat the girl's head abruptly with his gauntlet-fitted left hand. The helmet and gauntlet clashed, and a "gowan" heavy metallic sound reverberated.

「Akyaa! What are you doing all of a sudden!?」

「This's a time when other travellers are still sleeping. If you've the leisure to chatter pointlessly in a "kyan kyan" high-pitched voice, then load the luggage quickly. For what purpose is that mechanical doll for?」

「...Haai」

Forcing the small armoured girl into manual labour, Dimitar approached Valeria.

「Oi」

「W, what?」

Valeria thought of smiling if she had a somewhat listless expression right after waking up, and when she coughed slightly and motivated herself again, she faced Dimitar while smoothing down her hair.

「Did you see it?」

「Eh?」

「Her inside, or perhaps I should say her face. Did you see it last night?」

Valeria had thought what he'd say with a seemingly serious face,

but since she also wanted to speak of that matter at any rate, she lowered her voice and decided to respond to that question.

「I didn't see it!」

「What? She didn't take off her armour even when sleeping?」

「I mean, I fell asleep first...」

「Chi」

When Dimitar glanced at Valeria with a look like he was seeing garbage, he clicked his tongue deliberately to let her hear it.

「W, what's with that reaction!? It can't be helped since I'm tired!」

「You're noisy, good-for-nothing. Didn't I say that it's still before daybreak? Be quiet」

「Ugu...!」

Although she was offended by Dimitar's attitude, what he had said was sensible and justified, thus Valeria could only bite her lips without complaining.

Thereupon, the inn's proprietress opened the bar's door and came out.

「Dear guests, have you finished your preparations already?」

The proprietress who had put on a shawl over her shoulders brushed up her loose hair with a slovenly gesture and asked so in a small voice. However, even though she said "guests", her gaze was facing towards Dimitar only no matter how one looked at it. Moreover, it was strangely feverish.

Valeria felt an uncomfortable uneasiness from that, and the proprietress suddenly leaned coquettishly against Dimitar in her presence.

「Here, the breakfast that you've requested.」

「Thank you.」

Dimitar accepted the bundle that the proprietress held out looking disinterested. When Valeria was looking at that with wide eyes, Bettina sneakily—although that was her intention, she was actually making “gacho gacho” sounds—came along and whispered while stretching herself with all her might.

「Valeria-sama! W, what do you think of that sight?! It's as if um... the two of them give an impression of a couple parting ways the next morning after having slept together (後朝)!」

「Y, you sure know difficult words...」

「Why are you feeling admiration at that for desuyou!」

While the girls were having such a conversation, the proprietress clung to Dimitar with a “pito” and,

「Even so...」

Saying so, she clearly looked at Valeria and Bettina.

「...I don't know what kind of circumstances you have, but you've your hardships too, taking care of children」

「Oh...!？」

When she was called a child, Valeria reflexively rolled up her sleeve. If Bettina hadn't restrained her instantly, a vivid red line might have emerged on her white slender arm and set that woman who was extremely rude and oozing sex appeal on fire.

「P, please stop, Valeria-sama!」

「But that woman, towards this me who's a Dominas...!」

「I know that you're angry, but we're in the middle of a top secret

mission and are travelling incognito desu! You can't use magic carelessly desuyou!」

「You, didn't you make me toast the cheese with that very magic last night!」

「That's that, this's this desu! If you create trouble in such a place, this town's government officials will turn up and it'll become troublesome!」

「Nginununu...!」

Dimitar looked at Valeria with a cold gaze but before long, when the horses finished re-hydrating, he gripped their reins and spoke to the proprietress.

「I'll stop by again on my way back if there's time」

「Really? I'll be waiting, so you must come, okay?」

The proprietress wrapped both her hands around Dimitar's neck and pressed her plump lips.

「Waaaa!?」

Valeria and Bettina embraced each other and screamed at the sudden love scene.

「...So noisy」

Dimitar who had gently shaken off the proprietress's hands frowned and kicked Bettina's bottom.

「Let's go」

「S, stop speaking as though our preparations were slow!」

「Is that how you hear it? That's regrettable」

Dimitar pulled the horse and walked immediately. The reins of the

other horse were taken by Bettina. And slightly later, Valeria also began to walk at a quick pace.

「...Hey!」

Valeria walked while looking back to the rear many times. When she ran up to Dimitar once the figure of the proprietress wasn't in sight at last, she questioned him in a low and subdued voice.

「What exactly was that just now!? What's going on? What's your relationship with that proprietress!?」

「It's nothing. We're simply a guest and a proprietress. Do we even look like lifelong separated parent and child?」

「Don't joke with me! —Don't tell me, perhaps last night you...?」

「Ah. I slept in the proprietress's room」

「Weren't you sleeping outdoors outside the inn!?」

「...Are you an idiot?」

Dimitar looked back at Valeria with an amazed expression.

「Why must I specifically sleep at a place without roof when there's an inn? I requested the proprietress earnestly and borrowed half of her bed since there was no available room. I think that's just all there's to it」

「B, bed, you say...」

Valeria and Bettina somehow swallowed their screams which nearly escaped again and looked at each other.

「I know what you're imagining, and though that isn't wrong in general, the inn charges were fairly reduced due to that, so there's no reason to say this or that at this late hour. Rather, I hope that you'd be thankful at least」

「F, filthy!」

Valeria's face became bright red and she screamed. She felt like she was somehow always blushing and screaming after meeting Dimitar, but it wasn't something that she could stop.

「...What is?」

「I, I mean! You, w, with that proprietress from just now, u, um...!」

「I don't want to be called filthy by you who didn't even bathe」

「You bathed!?」

「I had my back rinsed」

「Kiiiiii!」

Valeria bit on the hem of her tabard and let out an angry groan. She was really furious at Dimitar who had replied nonchalantly.

However, Dimitar brought up his usual sound argument as though to rub such a Valeria's feelings the wrong way.

「That's enough, so be quiet. ...If I'm right, it still isn't the time for travellers to pass through the gates」

Certainly, the town during daybreak was deadly silent, and Valeria's voice seemed to reverberate in the alley.

To save the cost of candles and oil lamps, most people got out of bed at daybreak and immediately got into bed after sunset without staying up late pointlessly. Hence, there should be about one more hour until the town's residents normally got out of bed.

Looking around her surroundings, Bettina asked Dimitar.

「Dimitar-san, if the gate has yet to open, wouldn't it have been fine to delay our departure a little more?」

「We won't gain distance unless we leave before daybreak when it's devoid of public gaze. Even in the worst case, I plan to reach Seriba by the daybreak after tomorrow, you know?」

「But the gates still haven't open, right?」

「With money, such a thing is nothing」

「M, money!?」

「Anyway, be quiet. It'll become complicated if you guys talk」

Dimitar forcibly made the girls be quiet and softly knocked on the door of gatekeeper's office that was beside the south gate.

「...Who on earth is it? At such a time—」

The door opened a little, and the face of a gatekeeper with an expression which seemed plainly bad-tempered could be peeked at.

「It's because it's such a time」

Saying so, Dimitar handed a small leather bag which was hanging on his waist over to the gatekeeper. The contact between each gold coin made a "jyariri" sound in the hush of the night.

Ascertaining the weight of the bag with his hand for a while, the gatekeeper nodded a bit shortly.

「...I'll open the side gate. Leave at once」

「I understand. We're also travelling in a hurry」

Valeria and party, who had passed through the side gate that was opened illegally by the gatekeeper and went out, began to run towards the south again under the sky that had yet to start to turn white.

「Hurrying like this...is the rebellion at the border such a serious matter!?」

While sitting sideways on the horse's saddle and jolting, Valeria shouted with irritation mixed into it.

「If you don't know the reason for such a matter, then be quiet. You're embarrassing yourself when you say stupid things. Your embarrassment is my embarrassment, and your minus (マイナス) evaluation is my minus evaluation. Don't forget that」

「E, even if you don't say it, I won't make a blunder that'd make our evaluations a minus! I'm said to be an outstanding talent that's once in ten years, don't you know that!?」

「If you're as how they evaluated you to be, then that's good. —I'm going to increase the speed a bit more」

「Just a min...!」

Dimitar who had pushed Valeria's head down and adopted a forward-bent posture to cover the top of it kicked the horse's abdomen and raised the speed.



It was a “myth” plastered in lies.

Hokon would think so whenever he heard the sermons that the God believers spoke of.

The “God” whom they spoke of was only a “God” in heresy to Hokon. If the wisdom bestowed to humans by “God” was crest magic (*Furigana: Hiera mafrika*), and if the power conferred to only believers by “God” was crest magic, then what was this that they were using?

This was a phenomenon that existed in reality and was difficult to deny.

That being the case, it was their doctrine that was wrong.

Gazing at the flames that were burning brightly far away, Hokon nodded contentedly.

「—The office of the south district's guards is over there only?」

「Hai!」

「The soldiers?」

「They're in the midst of retreating to the old town areas in the north. Are they not reorganising their readiness centred on the old rampart?」

「And the residents?」

「The people who approved our noble undertaking increase daily, and all those who didn't seem to be evacuating to the old town district」

「Is that so?」

Hokon, who had received the report from his subordinate, turned around while clapping his hands that were fitted into gauntlets.

「Extinguish the office's fire and push up the defence line. Let the soldiers stand guard in turns and make those on break rest」

「Ha!」

「I'll also rest a little while」

Underneath Hokon who had entered the foremost line's military base—if exchanging that way of speaking, then it was merely a mansion which was confiscated from a civilian—, a slender black shadow soundlessly drew close.

「...Don't get carried away, Hokon」

Although she was completely covered from the head to toe in a black cape and robe, the voice was evidently a woman's. It wasn't

young enough to be called a girl's voice and might be a voice of a woman who was around thirty years old.

Hokon looked at the woman with a sidelong glance and stopped. There were no figures of other people in the dim hall where only candles' lights were flickering. Although the voices and sounds of his subordinates moving around busily were audible from the other side of the foyer's door, it was awfully quiet as though only Hokon was detached from the world.

「There's no problem. In fact, I've succeeded so far, right? There might be hundreds of stationing troops in Seriba but they're nothing special」

「I'm saying not to be conceited just because you earned a small military gain against the stationing troops of a remote countryside」

Leaning against the wall, the woman continued in a low voice.

「...Reinforcements from the central will come here soon」

「Reinforcements? That's absurd」

Raising only an eyebrow on one side, Hokon clasped his hands together before his chest.

「...Are you saying that they dispatched troops with the knowledge that it'll provoke Bigerou?」

「Iya, the one who's coming along for the time being is only a Dominas. ...Perhaps her role is to investigate this matter in absolute secrecy and report the details to the central」

「Those guys of the God's religion are capricious too. To dispatch an important and valuable Dominas-sama as such a reconnaissance unit」

「I said not to be conceited, right?」

Hokon who was laughing while applauding slightly felt the woman's gaze from beyond her cape and gulped.

「Don't think that a Dominas is the same as a magic warrior or so. If it's a hundred or two hundred stationing troops of a rural area, she possesses the power which can eradicate them in the blink of an eye by herself」

「That's fake」

「Though you outsiders say that, it's the truth. Unless she's the genius of the geniuses who were chosen from among tens of thousands of talented girls, she won't become a Dominas. —Her calibre is different from yours」

「...Choose your words a little, Medou」

Hokon's lips quivered with a "hikuri" and he muttered in a hoarse voice.

「I just don't have a little luck. ...However, I'll be successful this time. I'll eventually prove that I'm surely a person who can work to the utmost for my motherland」

「Your value and also what your barbarian Majesty whom you revere is thinking are irrelevant to me. —What's important is whether you can make this rebellion a success and shake Amaddo」

「I'm doing that, right?」



Hokon showed the back of his gauntlet-fitted hand to the woman called Medou.

「I'm grateful to you, and that's precisely why I intend to respect what you said. ...But if you mock me any further and I hear needless uncalled-for remarks, I won't tolerate it even if it's you, you know?」

「...In that case, allow me to observe」

Nodding several times, Medou melted into the darkness.

「Whether you can truly succeed...I'm also praying so that you can make a comeback to your former status, General Hokon」

「Pray to our God if you pray. Redountra is powerless. The God who has the true power is only our Marido」

「It's unfortunate, but I don't believe in Gods」

Leaving behind those words, Medou's figure disappeared completely. Hokon could only think that she mastered a mysterious magic that was impossible to understand.

「...What an unpleasant woman」

Clicking his tongue with a sigh mixed into it, Hokon clapped on one of his hands.



「—Oi」

「...Nn?」

Valeria who had slept before she knew it was woken up by the voice coming down from above her head and panicky wiped off the drool that was about to drip.

「Though it's my bad when you're sleeping without a care, you should wake up soon. We've arrived」

「...Eh?」

When she raised her face suddenly, her eyes met those of Dimitar who was upside down. In addition, the distance was strangely short.

「Kyaa!？」

「What are you surprised for at this point of time? Are you an idiot?」

「T, that's because—」

At Dimitar's scornful words, Valeria finally realised that she had entrusted her back to Dimitar and slept heartily.

「...So where's Seriba?」

Looking around to hide her embarrassment, she tried to change the subject.

It was probably because she had slept continuously on the inns' beds which she wasn't accustomed to on the day before yesterday and yesterday that she felt tired. She seemed to have slept steadfastly and considerably. She definitely had recollection of the time until sunset, but the day had already grown completely dark now, and stars were twinkling in the sky. The horse seemed to be trotting to somewhere within the forest, and things like the illumination of private houses wasn't completely visible.

「...Though you said that we've arrived, there's nothing in sight?」

「This place is a forest on the west side of Seriba. ...From here on, we're getting off the horse」

「Eh?」

「...Why are you making a surprised expression?」

Dismounting the horse under a large oak tree, Dimitar sighed.

「If a rebellion has occurred in Seriba, then we can't enter the town in a direct manner. In any case, we're in the middle of a top secret mission. We can only move stealthily」

「In the first place, what's the time now? Before daybreak?」

「...We've arrived quite earlier than we plan to, so it's still about four hours since the day got dark desuu」

Bettina who had sat down at the root of the tree spoke in a tired voice. Although the armour provided the power, the girl had kept on running without being able to doze off like Valeria, so it was understandable for her to be totally exhausted.

「—Oi Your Eminence. In the decree, what was written as the first thing to do when we reached Seriba?」

「E—to...get in touch with Seriba's mayor and learn of his detailed account」

「Then we've no choice but to go to the town hall」

「Just a minute! A Dominas is coming and yet there's no welcome—」

「How many times do you want me to say that we're in the middle of a top secret mission? To not be self-disciplined unless the whole town's people warmly welcome you with a “Welcome, Dominas-sama”, what kind of brat are you?」

「I, it's not like I—」

「Then don't complain. If you finish the mission safely and return to the capital, a grand debut awaits you even if you hate it. ...Just think of the mission now」

「B, but—ho, hora, the gate is closed, right? How'll we enter the town?」

「We just have to cross over the rampart」

「C, cross over...?」

「That's enough. You only have to do as I say. Anyway, follow me」

「And my luggage?」

「You're wearing your tabard underneath the mantle, right?」

「Yes」

「Then just the decree with His Highness and Head Director's signatures, and also your treasured sword will suffice. We can prove your social status with those. —Gacha Pink will guard our horses and luggage here」

「U, understood desuu!」

Leaving behind Bettina who looked really sleepy, Valeria began to walk into the forest in accordance to Dimitar. Although they walked at quite a fast pace, she was in a position where she had dozed off the whole time until just now, thus she couldn't complain about it.

When they had walked for about five minutes at a speed which was nearly similar to a trot, they came out of the forest shortly and ran into an ancient stone wall.

「Oi, Your Eminence」

「...I feel that I'm being make fun of when you called me "Your Eminence"」

「It's simply your persecution complex. ...More than that, fire」

「Fire?」

「Weave a fire so I can read the map. Make it as small as possible to be inconspicuous」

「...About this much?」

Valeria lit a tiny flame at her fingertip. Verifying the Seriba's map under that thin light, Dimitar looked up at the towering wall.

「—If it's from here, it's about one kilometre to the town hall? ... There's no sign of sentry on the rampart either, and it's a distance that we can cover without being exposed even if we walk along the roofs somehow」

「W, walk along the roofs!? That's impossible! Before that, crossing over this wall itself is—」

「I don't have expectation in your physical ability from the start」

Dimitar put away the map and held his right hand over his forehead. After that, he moved his fingertip to draw some signs in the empty space.

「—」

A bluish-black line of light ran from Dimitar's right elbow to his wrist. It was a complex magic crest (*Furigana: Hierateika*) that Valeria didn't see often.

Did he notice the gaze of Valeria who was staring at it as if it was unusual? Dimitar raised his lips suddenly.

「It's a magic that's irrelevant to Dominas」

Dimitar carried Valeria under his arm while saying so. He lowered his body for only an instant, faced the night sky and jumped immediately.

「Eh—!?」

There was no time to scream. By the time she realised, Valeria had already moved to the top of the rampart.

「W, what was that just now...?」

「A magic that temporarily increases one's physical ability dramatically」

「L, Lucius-sama...can use the magic like just now too?」

「It's a fundamental magic in the Seal Chivalric Order (*Furigana: Templar Aegis*). Rather, there's no magic that he's weak in. Unlike me who am weak in magic that is fired away flashily like flame or wind, he's a genius. —If he was a woman, you probably won't have your current status, you know?」

Even if she was told that Lucius's magic ability was higher than hers, she didn't feel surprised or angry. If it was Orvieto's son, then it wasn't strange even if Lucius had that much talent.

More than that, Valeria was instead a little surprised that Dimitar had said that there were also things which he was weak in. She had thought that he was a boy who'd never admit such things.

In the passageway where heavily dressed soldiers should be standing in a row during an emergency, there were only Valeria and Dimitar now.

Bending over in the passageway, Dimitar examined the town's state.

「...There are smokes raising up in the south」

「Eh? A fire?」

「It was extinguished already. ...Ma, I think it wasn't an ordinary fire」

「You mean that perhaps there was a battle?」

「Probably. The day has grown dark and today's military conflict seems to have almost ended...but the fact that things like watch fire are vaguely visible means that area is the foremost line?」

When Dimitar picked up a stone fragment that was lying near him, he suddenly faced towards a private house below and threw it.

「W, what are you doing all of a sudden!? Won't we be discovered!」

The stone which was thrown by Dimitar pierced through the skylight that was at the corner of the roof. Since even Valeria who was on the rampart could hear the sounds of something cracking and breaking, this house's resident would surely be woken up even if he was asleep.

However, light didn't come out from the house's window. Silence visited the surroundings again, and Valeria patted her chest with a "hou".

「Good grief...it's a good thing that house is vacant by chance...」

「It's not by chance」

「Eh?」

「Most of this town's private houses are probably unoccupied now」

「W, why?」

「It's a theory that if it's a town of this scale, the residents would barricade themselves in the town hall and the public institutions in its vicinity, and strengthened their defence if foreign enemies were allowed to invade. In the case where a rebellion occurred inside the town, the situation might also be similar」

「Then everyone has abandoned their homes and gathered in the town hall?」

「If they're the residents that side with the organisation」

Dimitar stared at south of the town and muttered.

「To say it roughly, this town is divided into north and south. The town hall is at the old town areas in the north, and since the

stationing troops' lodging and armoury are concentrated in that vicinity, everyone probably evacuated there and should have fortified the defence. ...The question is where did those guys who raised the rebellion set their headquarters but—ma, I think there's no need to investigate that far for now. It isn't our mission in the first place]

「Hey!？」

Dimitar wrapped his arm around Valeria's waist once more and carried her on his shoulder.

「Don't bite your tongue」

「What are!？」

She didn't have the time to ask that. Dimitar jumped down onto the roof of a private house while shouldering Valeria and started running at a speed that didn't feel the weight of Valeria who was placed on his shoulder.

It was obvious that this superhuman moving ability was due to magic, and such magic seemed useful for Dimitar who handled a sword.

Naturally, as long as she understood the accurate composition of the magic crest—and if she could reproduce it on her body—then Valeria should also be able to use the same magic, but nevertheless, she knew that Dimitar's degree of perfection in this magic was fairly high.

Simply put, he had something worth bragging about.

「...It's that building with a clock tower」

Dimitar stared into the darkness and muttered.

「Nee (*hey*)! Lights can be seen in its surroundings」

「It's probably the guards standing without sleep. ...It's definitely

that place.]

「If that's the case um...a, aren't you going down soon?」

Although it was comfortable, it was embarrassing to put her bottom on Dimitar's shoulder indefinitely. However, much less descending from the roof, Dimitar didn't show the behaviour of slowing down his speed.

「There's the possibility of the town hall being occupied by enemies. Until we clarify that, it's better to move without being discovered by anybody」

「I, I understand that reason but—」

「I'm going to jump. Don't bite your tongue」

Increasing his speed further, Dimitar faced the clock tower and greatly took off.

「Hi—!」

While carrying the speechless Valeria under his arm, Dimitar jumped over the plaza in front of the town hall in one go and held onto the roof with a severe inclination.



Many buildings which gave the impression of being storehouses and official residences were standing in a row around the town hall that had a vast courtyard. When observed carefully, feeble lights were leaking out from the windows that were closed by curtains. It was correct to conclude that the residents of the organisation's clique had evacuated to this area as expected.

「—Oi, we're moving」

「U, un」

Dimitar led Valeria, passed through the gable's window and

intruded into the town hall.

Dimitar who had descended into a place which seemed like the attic found the stairs leading to below with his eyes that had gotten used to the dim light.

「...Though you look very experienced in this sort of things, you don't actually have a strange criminal record, right?」

Who was it that said—darkness makes a person talkative? Perhaps she was trying to disregard her uneasiness, Valeria suddenly queried about such a thing.

「I wouldn't be recommended as a Hiera Glaphicos if I've one, right?」

「Then why were you dismissed from the Seal Chivalric Order?」

「In the society's rumours, was I dismissed?」

「Even though I didn't make the request, it was a rumour that my father learnt of from somewhere」

「...Is that so?」

Stroking his nape, Dimitar replied ambiguously. Regardless of how he replied, fellows who believed would believe, and fellow who didn't believe wouldn't believe. Dimitar knew well that people like him who exhausted words to try to explain their positions would be a wasted effort in many cases.

「.....」

When Dimitar raised his hand in silence and held Valeria back, he quietly opened the door which was before them after descending the narrow stairs.

It was a dim corridor. The flame of a candlestick which was hung on the wall threw little illumination to its surroundings, and the

voices of multiple people discussing with a “boso boso” were audible from below. Perhaps they were soldiers on night watch.

When Dimitar confirmed that there were no guards in the vicinity, he advanced quickly through the corridor and stood before a door that lay deep in. Pushing his ear softly against it, he guessed the state inside.

「This's...snoring?」

Valeria, who had imitated Dimitar and pressed her ear against the door, knitted her eyebrows and murmured.

「Even though those guys are becoming tense below, if this fellow is snoring loudly alone without a care, then he's generally a person of important status for sure」

When Dimitar turned the knob quietly and sneaked into the room, he rushed over to the bed which was beside the window in one breath and choked the man who was sleeping without a care.

「Mugu~!？」

「Don't make a noise」

Pressing the pillow onto the face of the man who had woken up and tried to struggle, Dimitar whispered close to his ear.

「...You'll really fall if you make too much noise, you know?」

「...!」

The man shrank back his neck with a “hiku” and his whole body became weak at once. Confirming that, Dimitar continued further.

「Are you Seriba's mayor, Don Puyol?」

「...!」

The man nodded many times to rub his face against the pillow.

「Get up slowly and look this way」

Dimitar separated his hand from the man's nape, got off the bed slowly and lighted a fire in the lamp.

「—This's the special duty ambassador from Roma, Dominas Valeria Costacurta-geika」

「Dominas...-sama?」

The man in pyjamas turned his head timidly and stared at Valeria who had been standing there idly.

「...Oi」

Dimitar poked Valeria with his elbow to urge her on.

「Ah, un」

When Valeria threw off her mantle hurriedly, she displayed the treasured sword that was hanging on her waist.

「I, I'm—」

「You don't talk, your solemnity will diminish」

Restraining Valeria who had tried to introduce herself anew, Dimitar took the treasured sword which he had snatched from her and approached the man.

「T, this's certainly the “Sword of Seal (*Furigana: Espada Dar Fokka*)” that's permitted to be carried by Dominas-sama only—! T, then you're...」

「You're noisy. Be quiet」

Threatening the man—Don Puyol whose voice had become excited, Dimitar presented the decree that he was entrusted with from Orvieto.

「Receiving the report from your express messenger, the Crown Prince and the magic academy sent Costacurta-geika. ...It's an absolute secret to the end. I don't want it to be known even to your subordinates」

「By the way, w, who're you?」

「...A Hiera Glaphicos who's assigned to the Dominas」

「What? Is there such a thing where a young male Hiera Glaphicos is assigned to a Dominas!?」

「Your general knowledge doesn't matter. ...Leaving that aside, will you explain the present condition of this town?」

Offering the chair which he had brought from the room's corner to Valeria, Dimitar asked Mayor Don Puyol while he personally stood at the bedside.

「—Judging from the appearance roughly, it seems that south of the town was seized by the dissidents?」

「T, that's right! Those guys had already gained total control of the new town areas in the south!」

「Do you know the mastermind?」

「Ha, hai! A man called Hokon who deals in wine and ale in this town」

「An alcohol wholesale dealer is the rebel army's leader?」

「Dominas-sama, that man isn't an ordinary alcohol wholesale dealer!」

Was he happy to be called out directly by Valeria? The mayor who was sitting meekly on the bed in seiza slapped his lap with a "supan" and raised his tension.

「—As a matter of fact, Hokon who came from the south nearly ten

years ago seems to be a former soldier of Bigerou.]

「What?」

「Apparently he lost in a military's power struggle, was ousted from his country and escaped to this town...」

「I've no idea what the fellow who carelessly let in such a person into the town is thinking...」

「I, it's not me, you know!? If someone is to be held accountable, then it's the mayor of that time!」

「Even if that's the case, he should constantly be kept under surveillance as a dangerous character」

Dimitar scratched the wrinkle on his forehead with his finger with a "kori kori". This time's rebellion was probably something that Hokon and his comrades hailing from Bigerou plotted and caused. In the first place, this town had many people and mixed races who flowed in from the south. Since these people potentially held animosity towards Amaddo, it was undoubtedly easy to incite them if done skilfully.

「Good gracious, it's because of the completely undependable stationing troops that the rebellion couldn't be prevented」

「Don't put the blame on people. The things which happened in this town are your responsibilities without exception」

「E, even if you say such things...I don't participate in the army's work...」

「Leave the question of who's responsible after everything is settled. —So, is Bigerou really involved in this time's rebellion?」

「That...it can't be confirmed yet. Though the stationing troops' Commanding Officer Mazzali also have qualm about that possibility」

「...Since you've a soldier who can think that far, why was seventy

percent of the town taken control of in just a few days?」

「That's um...t, there are a lot of magic users in the rebel army...」

Dimitar looked at Valeria instinctively. The other party was also looking at him with a surprised expression. They were most likely thinking about the same thing.

Magic warriors who reached a certain level were far more dangerous existences than fully equipped heavy knights. In Amaddo, magic warriors were put under the management of various places' magic academies, and the act of applying magic crests on people's bodies without the permission of the magic academy was also prohibited. It could be said that all magic warriors on a level that could become a war potential on the battlefield were basically registered in the magic academies.

Hence, it was very unnatural that there were fully fledged magic warriors in this Seriba which didn't have a branch of the magic academy.

「Ano~...」

The mayor looked at Valeria and Dimitar alternatively while rubbing his hands together.

「So, I'm wondering when are the reinforcements from central arriving...?」

「Who knows」

「Ha?」

「I've nothing concrete」

「N, no way!？」

「It can't be helped, right? His Majesty is absent right now. Even if His Highness mobilises the army at his discretion, it won't happen at

once. —So where's the headquarters of those guys?」

「Though there's no positive proof yet, it's the villa of a gentleman called Earl Boske in the new town. Perhaps it was somehow confiscated and used—」

「I see」

「W, what should we do?」

「For now, discuss properly with that Commanding Officer-dono and defend this place to the last. If you commence attack at the same time from inside when reinforcements come, the rebel army will lose its fighting spirit and collapse at once」

「I, is that how it is...?」

「Yes. —But don't tell anyone about us, including that commanding officer」

「Why? Since Dominas-sama has specially come, won't everyone's morale rise by announcing that grandly?!」

「I said that we're in the middle of a top secret mission, right? I don't want the enemy to know」

Dimitar covered Valeria with the mantle again.

「For the rebel army, a Dominas that's dispatched from central is an ideal target. If she was captured and assassinated, let alone raising it, the morale will conversely drop. It's better to leave it as a secret to avoid having Her Eminence being targeted」

「T, then...how shall I receive you?」

「Your job isn't to receive Her Eminence. It's to suppress the rebellion. —We're going back」

「Hey!」

When Dimitar pulled Valeria and dashed out of the mayor's bedroom, they returned to the attic, came out from the window and became thieves again.

「Good grief...what's with you since just now! Pulling me here and there!」

Waving her hand violently, Valeria glared at Dimitar with a sharp gaze.

Somehow, it seemed that this girl wasn't able to comprehend the seriousness of the situation even now. Although he knew that she was a sheltered girl, it was infuriating when it reached to this extent. Dimitar stroked his neck with a sigh mixed in and returned a glare to Valeria.



Clicking his tongue lightly, Dimitar spoke.

「We're returning to Roma」

「—Eh?」

「The rebellion is true and also quite serious. This town will fall completely to the rebel army's control before long. There's nothing we can do already. It's the role of the army later」

「Just a minute!」

Valeria stood up reflexively.

「Then why on earth did we come here for!?」

「To grasp the actual circumstances of this town and bring back this information safely. ...Are you unsatisfied with something in this task?」

「Such a thing...! Can't a mission like this be done without having me to come! You can do it by yourself anyway, right!?」

「Of course. ...Rather, it's sure to be completed even sooner by myself. In reality, you aren't of any use even if you're here」

Dimitar, who unhesitatingly declared things which rubbed Valeria's nerves the wrong way, immediately poured cold water on the flame of rage of the girl who had flared up as a result.

「—Such things happen often」

「...Eh?」

「In short, it's a child's errand though it's classified exaggeratedly like absolute secret or what not. —But all the missions that are assigned to new Dominas are like this. They're always errand-like missions that practically don't have significant dangers and could be smoothly completed by anyone」

「Why's it like this...!」

「There's no way that they'd place such excessive expectation on a new Dominas」

「.....!」

「Try and think calmly, Your Eminence-sama. If you're told to carry out this mission alone, do you think that you can succeed? You didn't think of concealing your social status despite it being an absolute secret, you couldn't secure an inn along the way by yourself, and sleeping outdoors is out of the question—properly speaking, even a mission of this degree is a heavy responsibility for such a you who's ignorant of the world」

She had no words to retort.

Everything was as Dimitar had said.

Although she was always instructed on everything and felt irritated along the way, she might not be able to even arrive at Seriba so early if it wasn't for Dimitar's management. On the contrary, her identity

would be exposed to people before leaving the capital and she couldn't deny the possibility of making a mess of the top secret mission.

「...But then I'm not criticising you at this late hour with that matter in particular. Dominas candidates are generally all sheltered girls with good lineages, and what's more, they study and train diligently for that reason since childhood. It'd be strange if they didn't grow up to be conceited and ignorant of the world」

Dimitar averted the gaze from the girl and stroked his neck with a sigh mixed in.

「—Therefore, they're made to do simple mission like this in the beginning, accumulate experience gradually, and gain confidence. For your case too, this time's mission will finish when you return to the capital and report. You'll receive words of praise from the Head Director and His Highness, and that's the end. It might be a good performance as your career's first step. You're lucky」

「That...do you mean including the matter of you becoming my Hiera Glaphicos, I'm lucky?」

「Who knows. —In any case, the idle chat ends here. We're leaving the town」

「I can't do that!」

「—」

Dimitar turned around slowly at Valeria's words.

「...What are you saying?」

「Such a thing wasn't written in the decree that I received! Even you said this just now, right? It wrote to be adaptable to changes, act by my decisions, and endeavour to solve the situation! Therefore, we're moving by my decisions from here on!」

「You...the best choice here is to return obediently as it is. It's

probably because the Head Director has expectation in you that she sent you on this time's mission.]

「What's there to expect in a child's errand!?」

「The top will probably announce that it was due to Valeria Costacurta's detailed report that the Seriba's rebellion could be swiftly dealt with when it ended. They'll script your "first campaign" with that synopsis and appeal to the citizens. It's the Head Director's intention to set you up as the central figure of the next era Dominas. ...Probably」

「Then make it a flashier debut! Capture that man called Hokon or something!」

Dimitar had settled everything, and she was simply just making a round trip from the capital to Seriba; how was this a mission?—even if that was the Head Director's motive, Valeria's pride didn't allow her to participate in that as it was.

It was Valeria's dream to build up a promising career as a Dominas and revive the Costacurta House with her own strength, but she didn't plan to borrow someone's power for that. If that was deemed acceptable, then Valeria wouldn't have refused paternal economic assistance in the first place.

For Valeria who strongly wished to fulfil her dream with her own strength, the synopsis which Dimitar spoke of was something that she couldn't possibly accept.

「.....」

Noticing Dimitar who was about to roll up his right sleeve nonchalantly, Valeria stood up quickly.

「Richternach-kyou! You should know what'll happen if you who are a Hiera Glaphicos harm me, right!?」

「...Chi」

「If you try to bring me back home by force, then I'll also remove you by force! What's the extent of the magic of the ignorant me, do you want to taste it once? —To begin with, a Hiera Glaphicos should obey my order, right?」

「...Before that, it's my duty to protect the Dominas's body even if I die」

「Then pray to Redountra for my safety!」

Valeria, who threw off her mantle with a “ha!” and tried to jump from the edge of the roof, recalled that she unfortunately didn't have that degree of physical ability and began to search for a foothold to descend to the ground somehow.

「E—to...」

「...Oi, Your Eminence」

「What? You want to obstruct me no matter what—」

Valeria looked back at Dimitar over her shoulder and unintentionally held her tongue.

「...We lost the timing to slip out of the town because you thought of unnecessary things. I'll say it first, but this isn't my responsibility」

「Eh...?」

「It seems to have become a very troublesome thing」

「W, what do you mean? You're too brusque and your words are lacking!」

「For the time being, our silhouettes are completely visible from below thanks to the moonlight here. It's better to go down」

「G, go down, you say—」

「Hurry up」

「Fuwa!?」

Dimitar carried Valeria and jumped down from the roof.

Immediately afterwards, innumerable red streaks of light ran and tore through the dark night.

「!」

“Tatatan!” Together with those light sounds, the area where Valeria was at some time ago lit up in flames.

「Enemy attack!」

Dimitar didn't shout to convey it to Valeria. He probably intended to warn the people who were gathered at the town hall.

However, that shout was immediately drowned out by war cries. From the depths of the darkness, men who were holding weapons sprung out and attacked with vigour like surging waves.

「Kya!」

「...You're noisy」

Dimitar pulled out a gigantic sword from the scabbard on his waist and swung it greatly with a “burun”.

「Be!」

The man who was struck by the back of the blade had his breath cut short and was blown away.

The enemy's objective seemed to be a night attack on the town hall, and most of them who advanced with a “wara wara (*bustling*)” from the south didn't have much interest in Valeria. However, not to mention helmets, the majority didn't even wear armours. Rather than soldiers of the rebel army, they were just ordinary people from that area. If one was to search for a common feature forcibly, then all of them had a scarlet cloth wrapped around their upper right arms.

「If you can't control your magic skilfully, don't use it」

Dimitar spoke while he pulled Valeria's hand and ran.

「—These guys are just the town's citizens who are manipulated by the man named Hokon. Don't kill them if possible」

「K, kill, you say—」

Having shocking words thrown at her, Valeria gulped.

「...You said such big things without having that sort of resolution?」

Dimitar looked at Valeria with cold eyes.

「Chasing after Hokon means, needless to say Hokon himself, you may have to kill the people around him depending on the situation. ... This's why I said to return to the capital, you know?」

「—」

Valeria's magic ability was prominent within Amaddo, and even when looking at the continent as a whole, it belonged to the fairly high category. This wasn't conceit, but to be chosen as a Dominas was a proof of that. However, she hadn't used it to kill or wound someone. On the contrary, she hadn't even thought of the likelihood when a time to use magic with that purpose would come until just now.

Did he sense Valeria's hesitation? Dimitar spoke.

「...Anyway, you don't seem to be able to kill people. But this isn't something to be ashamed of in particular. Instead, kindness is needed for Dominas. That's why you just have to think of protecting yourself only」

Dimitar kicked down a man who was blocking their path before them and made him shut up. He then led Valeria and ran into a dark alley.

The men who used the red cloths as their trademark appeared endlessly from within the darkness and ran towards the town hall. The rebel army which had gained control of Seriba's new town areas scaled over the old rampart dividing the new and old town areas, and might be planning to make the town hall capitulate in one go.

「.....」

When they appeared from the alley quietly and peeked at the surroundings, it seemed that clashes between both armies had arisen here and there.

Valeria arranged her breathing and suggested to Dimitar in a low voice.

「...How about we take advantage of this opportunity to sneak into the place of that man called Hokon? Isn't that good? If so, the victims will also be less」

「That's a good idea. ...So, where's Hokon?」

「—Ah」

「That's a wonderful idea that anyone can think of. ...Incidentally, it'd be great if you can also ruminate on why I didn't choose to do so」

Laughing at Valeria's plan that was too naive, Dimitar took a deep breath greatly.

「...It's not my intention to threaten you, but be prepared」

「W, what?」

「If those guys really caused the rebellion with Bigerou's backing—then the core of the rebel army are the barbaric believers」

Among the heretics who weren't educated with Redountra's doctrine, in particular the southern people who believed in barbaric Gods like Marido and his clan, they were called barbaric believers by

Valeria and others. Bigerou was a country where such barbaric believers gathered.

「The barbaric believers don't believe in the myth of Redountra. It's still fine if they just don't believe in it, but those guys assertively try to make Redountra's influence decline.]

「S, so...?」

「If a Dominas falls into the hands of those guys who can't help but want to make the influence of God's religion decline, then what kind of experience is it...you can somehow imagine that, right?」

Without a doubt, she'd be shamed first and killed later. —Even Valeria knew that much. The act of defiling and murdering a Dominas who was the wife of Redountra was namely an act of defiling Redountra.

Seeing Valeria nodding stiffly, Dimitar muttered.

「Anyway, we'll slip out of the town first and meet up with Gacha Pink—」

Dimitar thereupon shut his mouth and raised his face.

「There they are! The Dominas!」

「!?」

From the edge of the eaves of the private house that the pair was leaning against, several men bent forward and shouted.

「It's the girl who's wearing the Dominas's tabard! She's here! Don't let her escape!」

「Just a min—」

Dimitar raised the sword in his right hand overhead. A line of bluish-black light ran from the elbow of his right hand that was gripping the sword to his fist. It connected to a groove which was

carved on the sword's blade and radiated a similar bluish-black light. It was as though the magic crest on Dimitar's arm had taken in the magic crest which was carved on the sword, and seemed to form an even bigger magic crest.

「...This's a big problem」

When Dimitar swung his sword with a “burun”, flames spouted upwards from its tip.

「！」

「Gyafu—」

In front of Valeria who had frozen in surprise, the men's bodies emitted thin smokes with a “busu busu” and fell down.

Valeria stared at Dimitar's sword and then looked at the youth's face.

「Y, you, that's—?」

「Don't be in a daze. Do you understand the current situation?」

「Eh...?」

「These men know who you are, you know?」

Poking the men who were groaning feebly with his toes, Dimitar said so.

「B, but—even though this's an absolute secret...?」

「That's why this's a problem...no matter how you think about it, they accepted the fact that you're here as if it was natural. After all, they were searching for a Dominas with the tabard as the sign」

Grasping Valeria's hand, Dimitar began to walk at a quick pace. Meanwhile, the boy's eyes darted left and right without being negligent.



「One hour has yet to elapse when we arrived at Seriba, and we've only met with that plump mayor during that time. If we assumed that you were exposed, then it's during our stay at the towns' inns until now, or even earlier than that—」

It meant that this rebel army also had an information network in Roma, but he didn't want to think of it as a possibility too much.

「—There they are!」

「！」

Valeria ducked her head and looked back at the voice that came from behind. Men who held torches were running here to crowd together in the alley where the pair had walked moment ago.

「Richternach-kyou! T, they're catching up!」

「...It's unfortunate but the front is also blocked」

「Huh!?」

She saw the lights of torches approaching from their front over Dimitar's shoulder.

「You take care of there! I'll take care of here!」

「A girl who doesn't know actual combat shouldn't take command」

「I'm the one who gives orders! I'm the superior, you know!?」

Flipping up her tabard, Valeria thrust both hands outwards. There was only a see-through dress with a bustier and hot-pants under her tabard, and even though feelings of embarrassment had first welled up from exposing her bare skin in front of people, it was inevitable for the sake of using full-scale magic. To use magic, magic crests had to be exposed—that was to say, exposing the skin to the magic power that filled this world.

「...!」

Complex lines of light ran from the bare area of her décolleté to her fingertips via both her shoulders. Different magic crests emerged on her right and left arms, and the red lines which ran on her arms covered her white skin completely in one breath.

「...Maa, I'll go easy on you at least」

Valeria, who had narrowed her eyes and smiled, unleashed the magic power that dwelt in her right hand.

「Gua—」

The huge fireball brushed aside the dark night and gushed out, hitting the men who were hot on their heels from behind directly.

「Damn!」

「S, shoot!」

Countless arrows flew so as to overtake the panicked voices.

「I'll show you what the power of a Dominas is—！」

When Valeria released the magic power in her left hand, an invisible strong shield was deployed there and easily deflected the arrows that were rushing in.

If it was a girl who had acquired training as a Dominas candidate, she could freely use the magic crests which were applied onto her whole body and master numerous magic. However, to use several magic simultaneously and also in succession was by no means an easy thing. A feat which was similar to the current Valeria's might be impossible for novice magic warriors.

Valeria turned lightly on the spot and stepped strongly on the ground with her right foot that was raised highly for a moment. Although it was just like a dance, it was in fact a ritual dance to borrow the strength of the God.

「Ha!」

When she stepped on the ground, red lights ran from her healthy thighs via her knees and caused magic crests to emerge, and a sudden gust was created in Valeria's surroundings.

「Upu—」

「Oh!?」

Valeria's body soared into mid-air and she moved to the roof of a private house.

「Even I can do a trick of this level!」

Valeria, who had taken up a position where she could command a view of the enemies, faced downwards and threw fireballs successively. In the case of arrows and javelins, they could be knocked down with swords, but only flames which couldn't be smashed apart even if hit were showering from overhead. The men screamed and threw the line into disorder.

「—Where's that guy!?」

The men's screams and bellows mingled, and while the vicinity became chaotic, Valeria scanned the surroundings and searched for Dimitar's figure.

「Ah...there he is」

Valeria didn't understand the handling of a sword wholly, but when she overlooked from above like this, she understood well the uniqueness of Dimitar even though she was an amateur. Far from ignoring the narrowness of the back alley, Dimitar conversely utilised that narrowness and skilfully avoided squaring off against multiple enemies at once. Moreover, despite most of the rebel army being unable to cope with the length of their spears and swords in this alley, Dimitar calmly wielded that huge sword without hitting it awkwardly.

Besides being able to use a sword to that degree, he had knowledge of magic and was well-informed of world affairs. Additionally, he had a sharp tongue, and would surely be disliked even in the Seal Chivalric Order. Often the case, human was sure to be jealous of people who surpassed him. For Valeria who was exposed to severe competition in regard to the Dominas's positions which were few in numbers, she understood that more than enough. Although Valeria didn't specifically hear what kind of trouble Dimitar had created in the Chivalric Order, there might unexpectedly be a cause in that matter.

Dragging out shrill sounds of wind that split the air, red flame arrows shot past the ear of Valeria who was watching Dimitar with a "ho—" for a short while.

「! —Magic!?」

Valeria turned around quickly, lowered her body hurriedly and evaded the flame arrows that flew here continuously. When she observed, those guys had crept up onto the roof on the opposite side. Although they similarly had red cloths wrapped around their right upper arms, unlike the other men, their outfits had the style of a foreign country from somewhere.

「Don't tell me...Bigerou's—?」

Although she had doubts, Valeria lifted the magic shield in her left hand and threw flame arrows.

「For the barbaric believers to use magic...impossible! I won't accept it!」

「Gubu!」

The men who couldn't manipulate several magic simultaneously like Valeria received her magic and tumbled down from the roof easily.

「Over here! She's over here!」

「Capture the Dominas!」

Right after the men fell off, twice the number of men climbed onto the roof this time.

「Good grief!」

Valeria stamped her right foot again. The whirlwind which arose then and there let the girl's body flew towards the night sky.

「As expected, I don't want to be surrounded—!?」

The posture of Valeria, who tried to cross over a two-story house and two streets in one leap, abruptly collapse with a jerk.

「So...ku!」

Valeria somehow hanged onto the edge of the eaves of a private house and escaped from crashing into the ground. She desperately clambered to the roof, remembered the uncomfortable feeling from just now and stared at her right knee.

「!? No way...!」

The red lines which coloured Valeria's white leg blinked weakly and disappeared shortly. Although she concentrated her mind again, much less a whirlwind, even a gentle breeze couldn't be generated any more. The magic crests which should circulate magic power from her thigh to her toes—as if they were painted in the colour of her skin—vanished with a “pokkari”, centring on her kneecap.

「Eh? Huh!? Why? Why!」

Even when she rubbed her knee frantically, the magic crests which had disappeared didn't come back.

She didn't know why did such a thing happened, but her right foot which had lost the magic crests could no longer use magic satisfactorily. Valeria instantly concentrated her consciousness onto

the magic crests of both her arms, created a whirlwind on one of her palm, threw it at the roof and tried to jump.

「—!？」

Just before that, the magic crests on the back of her right hand vanished this time.

And then Valeria saw it.

A needle of pure white and thin light flew from somewhere, pierced the girl's back of her hand and made the magic crests which were radiating in red disappear.

「！You...！」

When she raised her face, a man was standing directly in front.

「To have a Dominas specially come from far away...this's godsend —」

The man placed his hands together before his chest and showed a gesture of a small applause. He spread out his hands to the left and right and slowly directed his left arm forward. A line of white light immediately materialised on the man's gauntlet that covered up to his elbow.

「Don't tell me—magic crests!?」

「The arrogance of you guys who arbitrary decide that crest magic belongs to God's believers only is truly—truly unpleasant」

When the man spat out so and adopted a pose akin to shooting a bow and arrow, a needle of white light gushed out from his left index finger.

「!!」

Valeria held up the magic shield in her left hand and tried to reflect it, but the needle of light penetrated her invisible shield and even

made the magic crest on the back of her left hand disappear.

「Can the works of your God do this?」

A scoffing voice accompanied the next needle.

「Ah...!」

The fourth needle instantly erased the important magic crest which was concentrated on her chest and drove a large wedge into the girl's faith simultaneously. The sense of loss which was like having a large hole in her chest robbed Valeria's whole body of her strength.

Right afterwards, Valeria's body was sent flying flashily.

「—Gu!」

Valeria fell from the roof and her breathing became clogged. She finally realised that she had been kicked in the solar plexus.

「—If you're the “wife” of Redountra, then you're a “witch” to us. Though you label our magic as sorcery (*Furigana: Fata marefika*), the technique that you use is, from our perspective, the real sorcery and unorthodox」

Looking down at Valeria from the edge of the eaves, the man clapped his hands slowly in front of his chest.

「—Gentlemen, tie up the “witch” with ropes」

「Ha!」

A rebel army's party that was surrounding Valeria, who couldn't move due to pain and breathing difficulty, received that man's command and tied her up.

「I'm...not...a witch...!」

Valeria glared at the man who had descended from the roof.

「Fun...we shall make those heretics who continue their foolish resistance understand clearly that the Dominas whom they worship is no more than an ignorant and powerless girl in front of them. With that, their fighting spirit will also be broken completely.」

「...!」

The features of the man who was looking down at her and smiling coldly warped effortlessly.

And thus, Valeria's consciousness was swallowed by a deep darkness.

Chapter 04 - The Thing That Was Lost

A crest magic warrior who could master magic at a practical level was an existence that was more dangerous than a fully armed heavy knight. Hence, each country managed their magic warriors strictly so that magic wouldn't be misused for crimes.

In the magic superpower, Amaddo, the Royal Magic Academy's main institution and its branches were located in the Holy City and its provinces respectively. Though they managed the crest magic warriors, Dominas who were extremely powerful magic warriors also worked as the magic academy's Senior Inspectors during peace times.

There were three Dominas in the present Amaddo.

Valeria Costacurta who was called the once-in-10-years talented woman.

Karin Rudbeck who had the alias of “Ice Gaze”.



And Shakira Babel, the “**Immortal Dominas**” who was extolled as the “**Matchless Person**” of Amaddo.

The shouts which had arisen until some time ago transformed into cries of triumph now and faded away towards the south.

Dimitar, who had hidden himself in a passageway on the rampart and arranged his breathing, rose up slowly and sighed.

It wasn't very conspicuous due to the darkness, but his entire body was bloodstained.

However, most of it was the victims' blood and Dimitar's body didn't have much damage.

But it couldn't be helped but said that the damage on his mental side was fairly big.

「—Dimitar-san?」

A subdued voice which was hesitant of the surroundings came from below.

「Is the one over there not Dimitar-san desuka?」

「...You're being careless, Gacha Pink」

Dimitar uttered discontentedly and jumped from the rampart.

「Dimitar-saan!」

Bettina rushed out from deep inside the dense forest with a “gacha gacha”.

「T, that's great! I, I was, lone, lonely by myself—!」

Avoiding the tackle of the girl who had the power of a cow's level, Dimitar scanned the surroundings.

「Is that so? You're alone huh」

「Uuu...ugu, e, e, e—do, do you know how much I wanted to go pee...」

「Your desire to urinate is inconsequential」

「B, but, it seems that the cartridge is becoming empty soon...!」

「What? I just have to exchange it right?」

「P, please do」

When Bettina took out a cylindrical cartridge from among her luggage and passed it to Dimitar, she turned her back and squatted.

「...I think it's this place」

Recalling what the Chief Engineer did, Dimitar opened the box on the back of Bachururus.

「And the empty one is to be thrown away?」

「Ahh, d, don't! In the first place, this's the crystallisation of the cutting-edge technology that stores magical power artificially」

Bettina who had her cartridge changed began to draw a circular magic crest (*Furigana: Hierateika*) on the ground excitedly.

「...What's that?」

「By drawing a magic crest like this on the ground, then...alright... put the empty cartridge in this way here, it absorbs the magical power that drifts infinitely in the nature, and will be fully charged in about one night desu」

「That's convenient. ...So is that true?」

「Why're you doubting me!?」

「It's too convenient. —But maa, if it's that eccentric Chief Engineer, it isn't strange even if he invented this sort of device. After all, he's a man who has sacrificed his life that much」

Shrugging his shoulders, Dimitar unpacked his luggage. Biting the hard bread which he had taken out roughly, he forcibly swallowed it down with cheap wine.

「—By the way, Dimitar-san」

「What?」

「Um...where's Valeria-sama?」

「We got separated」

「Eh?」

「If she felt like it, she should be able to fly in the air albeit short distance. For her escape to be later than mine means that she was probably caught」

「Eeh!? Valeria-sama was caught!?」

「There's no conclusive proof, but seeing the rebel army withdrew easily, it's valid to think that they had earn some military gains. In other words, they returned triumphantly since they had caught the Dominas」

「W, what'll happen if Dominas-sama is caught desukaa!?!」

「If the other party are barbaric believers, it won't be strange even if she's killed. There's also the possibility of experiencing something unpleasant, which I'm hesitant to explain to you who is a kid, before she's killed」

「Eeeh!?!」

「You're being noisy at everything」

Dimitar chided Bettina and stood up. Though the simple meal only served to barely satisfy his hunger, it helped to recover his energy which was lost in the melee to some extent nonetheless.

「Will Valeria-sama be safe...?」

Bettina sank down to the ground on the spot with a “gasha”.

「If they want to use the trump card that's the Dominas effectively, they'll execute her publicly before the citizens. Thus the rebel army's morale will rise, and the mayor's side will conversely become dispirited」

「When'll the execution be desuka!?!」

「Once dawn breaks I guess. Even the rebel army should know that reinforcement may come from central if they dawdle. If so, they've no reason to delay it」

「W, why is Dimitar-san so calm desuka!?」

「I can't resolve the situation if I'm flustered」

Dimitar wiped off the blood that had stuck onto his whole body, frowned and stroked his neck.

「—You'll standby here as it is」

「Understood! ...But what about Dimitar-san?」

「I'll go and rescue Her Eminence」

「B, by yourself desuka!?」

「Do you think I can take you along on a swift covert activity?」

Dimitar gave a small and wry smile, and pulled out Jagieruka from its scabbard on his waist.

Bettina—or rather, Bachururus's power was definitely useful. If this girl, who possessed both the sturdiness to repel arrows and the charging power of a raging bull, rushed forward, it might be impossible to incapacitate her unless a catapult-type ballista or a powerful magic was used. But it was a fact that she was entirely unsuitable for moving without being discovered by the enemy.

「Secure the luggage onto the horses and be on standby so that you can escape anytime」

「B, but, what if in the worst case Dimitar-san...d, didn't come back...?」

「Even if I didn't come back, Her Eminence will surely return. At that time, you must bring her back to the capital. ...This's an important mission」

「I, I understand that but...I'll be troubled if Dimitar-san also doesn't come back since Oji-sama will be sad」

「Even I don't intend to die in such a place」

Dimitar rolled up his right sleeve and swung Jagieruka lightly.

The magic crest which was carved onto Jagieruka's surface supplemented the magic crest that was applied on Dimitar's arm. The magical power ran through that complex path according to a defined law and temporary transformed the boy into a superhuman. With the magic "Double Power (*Furigana: Force*)", Dimitar jumped and moved to the top of the rampart again.

「Dimitar-san! May the fortunes of war be with you!」

Glancing at Bettina whose pink body was peeking out from a thicket and was waving her hand, Dimitar started running.

From the unconfirmed information that the mayor's side had obtained, the current headquarters of the rebel army was Earl Boske's villa in the new town. He didn't know what sort of person Earl Boske was, but on this occasion, it couldn't be helped even if he act flashily there (*hence damaging the Earl's villa*). Even if this was the king's royal villa, it couldn't be compared to an active duty Dominas.

「—」

Referring to the map that was perfectly driven into his head, Dimitar arrived at the vicinity of the intended villa and soundlessly jumped off the roof. Though the world was still completely ruled by the darkness of the night, there was probably three to four hours left. If the sky began to grow light, covert activity would become remarkably difficult.

Decreasing his breathing frequency to the limit, he erased his presence and advanced into the darkness.

The sounds of footsteps moving about and voices of the soldiers on

night watch could be heard from the perimeter of the grand villa that was enclosed by high walls. Laughter was mixed in sometimes, and it might be due to gaining unexpected military gains in the raid just now. They had thick southern accents and there were parts where Dimitar couldn't follow, but as expected, Valeria was undoubtedly captured and brought here.

Dimitar secretly sat down on an empty barrel which was piled up and kept Jagieruka in its scabbard.

「It had become something inconceivable huh...Oba-sama might have planned to add prestige to the new Dominas's first job, but her consideration backfired—」

Although Dimitar focused his mind so as not to interrupt his tension, he inadvertently harboured doubts.

It was natural that Orvieto knew Dimitar's character well, but at the same time, she also should have understood what kind of girl Valeria was. If so, it was hard to consider that Orvieto couldn't foresee what Valeria would think when she was told the truth concerning her mission—and how the girl who had a strong desire to succeed with her own strength would act.

「Am I the one being tested...? If I'm being tested whether I can control that shrew—then Oba-sama sure is bold」

If Valeria lost her life with this, it'd be a terribly hard blow for Amaddo. Naturally, there'd be voices which hold Orvieto and the crown prince accountable for dispatching Valeria who was still a novice Dominas on this mission. However, the crown prince was the only son of the king after all, and surely Orvieto alone would have to take the blame substantially.

「...This isn't a laughing matter」

The act of circulating magical power inside the body through magic crests—in short, the act of using magic, was accompanied by physical and mental fatigue. Though this world was full with an inexhaustible

supply of magical power, humans couldn't draw it in endlessly. Just like how it wasn't possible to keep running for a long time, it'd cause "shortness of breath" and magic couldn't be used continuously for a long time.

Dimitar glossed over his fatigue with a short rest and stood up with a wry smile.

New footsteps approached directly close by, and though he heard humming, he didn't hear the voice talking to someone else.

Judging the other party to be alone, Dimitar pulled out a knife that was inserted in his boots. He then dragged the soldier who was walking while humming without a care into the cover.

「!/? Y, you—」

「Shut up」

Straddling the soldier who had panicked and struggled, Dimitar struck his chest with all his might.

「O...」

The soldier ended up expelling the air in his lungs forcibly, lost his voice instantly and shook his body painfully.

Dimitar flashed the knife ostentatiously and pushed it against the soldier's throat.

「Don't make noise even if you can let out your voice alright? I don't want to add any extra work, and you'd also hate to have extra holes added to your body right?」

The soldier nodded weakly and in the end, inhaled a large breath. The spear which the soldier was supposedly shouldering was already kicked flying far away by Dimitar.

「Answer truthfully. —Is this place your headquarters?」

「Y, yes...」

「Is the leader Hokon?」

「It's General Hokon...」

「I don't care about that guy's past glory for now. ...Did you captured a person who was dispatched here from central in the raid some time ago?」

「...W, we did.」

「Is that so?」

Dimitar exerted strength into his right hand slightly and the knife's tip cut into the man's throat just a little.

「Hi!」

「Don't worry. It was just a slip of my hand. As long as you don't irritate me, it won't slip any further. ...So, the one who was captured is a Dominas?」

「.....」

「Do you intend to experiment it? To test the extent of my irritation with your body; you're quite a challenger huh」

Dimitar muttered indifferently and let the knife slip further. A red line ran from the man's throat to the tip of his chin. The amount and pain of the flowing blood shouldn't have been something great, but they were enough to make the soldier shudder.

「It, it's a Dominas!」

The soldier who had refused to talk once began to speak fluently immediately again.

「The general defeated t, that fake; the girl who pretended to be God's wife! A, and captured her! He'll execute that girl, and the s,

stupid—」

「If you're to keep fumbling your words, then you don't need to say the unnecessary stuff」

With the knife, Dimitar hit the cheek of the man who was drenched in sweat with a “hita hita” and spoke.

「...So where's that girl? She was brought to this headquarters right?」

「Y, yes...but, which room is she in, I—」

「You don't know?」

「I, I don't know」

「...Those're the words that irritate me the most so far」

Dimitar held down the soldier's mouth, put his entire weight and sank his knee into the soldier's solar plexus.

「！」

Dimitar made the soldier faint in one blow; when he covered the soldier from above with an empty barrel and hid him, Dimitar did an approach run softly and jumped over the wall before the next night watchman came.

Earl Boske seemed to be quite a wealthy person and his villa was fairly large. There were watch fires burning here and there on the premises, and countless armed soldiers were wandering around. Seeing that they weren't negligent like the night watchman from just now, they were probably professional soldiers who became estranged from the stationing troops.

As Dimitar hid himself in a short thicket, he focused his consciousness on his right hand. Magical power flowed into the magic crest which was applied on Dimitar's arm and it emitted a faint bluish

black light.

「In such a mansion, the places where people can be confined are limited...」

Convincing himself with that mutter, Dimitar fired small flame arrows in succession.

「Mu!」

「What is it!? What happened!」

Dimitar's "Fire Bullet (*Furigana: Blast*)" knocked down all the watch fires and light was erased from the backyard.

At the same time, the soldiers reacted without a moment's delay. Some set up their spears and prepared for an attack, and some started running towards the main building.

「...Yare yare」

Dimitar stroked his neck with a sigh and moved to the roof of the main building under the cover of the night.

♦♦♦

Her side hurt.

She was kicked heavily and her ribs might be cracked.

But when compared to this surprise and humiliation, she could endure this pain no matter how much it was.

「Ku...!」

Regardless of how much strength she put in, the rope that was binding Valeria didn't move an inch. From the start, it wasn't something that could be torn off with a sixteen-year-old girl's physical strength.

Hence, Valeria remained lay down with a “goron” on this cold floor.

There was only a small latticed window on the stout door, and though only a weak light leaked in from there, it barely illuminated the room’s interior that was filled with stagnant air. Many jute bags were stacked in the corner and bunches of garlic and herbs were dangling from the ceiling. Perhaps this place functioned as a storehouse where food was kept.

Valeria shivered from the coldness and pain which permeated her body, and once more put strength into both her hands. It wasn’t to tear off the rope binding her waists. She thought of weaving a small flame with magic and burnt off the rope.

But no matter what she did now, the flame which could usually be lit up instantly by concentrating her mind couldn’t be created. She couldn’t see her arms which were tied behind her, but she totally didn’t sense the magic power passing through there.

「To have erased my magic crests—」

Valeria recalled the time when she was shot by that man’s mysterious needles of light.

There was no pain or impact. Leaving only a vague sense of discomfort, that needle took away the magic crests from Valeria’s skin.

The procedure of carving magic crests onto the skin involved considerable pain. From the time when Valeria had just turned 10 years old, time was spent little by little to carve the magic crests onto her whole body. In particular to becoming a Dominas, highly dense magic crests which were much more complicated than an average magic warrior’s were required. Therefore, Valeria’s pain was far more painful and longer than the children who generally aimed to be magic warriors.

However, everything which she had obtained at the end of that pain was lost in just a few minutes.

That sense of loss was more unbearable than anything for the current Valeria.

「...U」

Valeria bit her lips, muffled her voice and cried.

Though it was a shock to have lost her magic, it was even more of a shock that it was due to the sorcery (*Furigana: Fata marefika*) which was manipulated by the barbaric believers. This was the same as Redountra whom Valeria wholly relied on had lost to pagan Gods.

Valeria, who was shaking her shoulders and crying, suddenly perceived steady footsteps descending the stone staircase and gulped. At the same time, unfamiliar words of southern accent and coarse laughter were heard.

「...!」

If the people who grew up in Bigerou didn't have the heart to worship Redountra, then there was no sense of reverence towards Dominas in them either. Naturally, they wouldn't hesitate to harm Valeria too.

But what Valeria feared more was that her body would be defiled. To the barbaric believers, the current Valeria was just a defenceless "girl" whose body was deprived of freedom and was lying down.

「Kuu...」

Wriggling her body like a caterpillar, Valeria escaped to the corner of the storehouse. Even though there was no place to hide anywhere, she couldn't help but to do so.

Soon, the footsteps stopped in front of the door and the sound of a lock resounded with a "gachari" instead. It seemed that the sturdy lock on the door was removed. Though someone appeared to be peeking inside from the small window, the other party's face wasn't visible from Valeria's side.

New tears streamed down Valeria's cheeks that were wet with tears. She wanted to scream loudly, but to not have done so was the girl's last pride.

The door finally opened quietly and two men who were carrying a small lantern entered. There was a slight opposition to calling them as men. They were boys whose ages didn't look to be different from Valeria's. That their skins' colour was somewhat dark was probably because they were—judging from their speeches' accent—people who had migrated from beyond the mountain.



However, even if she couldn't comprehend the boys' hushed conversation, she understood the meaning of the glitters in their eyes that were staring at Valeria. On the contrary, the part where they weren't adult men but still boys made Valeria feel unpleasant afresh.

She got goosebumps over her entire body and the centre of her body grew cold rapidly. The feeling of despair at being unable to escape gnawed at the girl's mind in one breath.

It was at that time when the boy who had entered later tried to close the door behind him.

「—Ngoo!?」

The boy's body was dragged out of the storehouse with a tremendous force and his back crashed into pathway's wall.

「!?」

The boy who was carrying the lantern became surprised and turned around. The unconscious boy's body flew here and both of them struck the storehouse's wall together.

「...Eh?」

The lantern tumbled onto the floor and the fire went out. The surroundings then became dim instantly.

In the midst of that, something moved.

Valeria held her breath and strained her ears.

It seemed like something heavy was being dragged along. The jute bags were then torn and the wheat inside spilt out, making "zara zara" sounds. The feeble groans of the boys mixed in occasionally, but they also disappeared shortly, and there was no sound before long.

「...?」

Valeria desperately strained her eyes.

Someone then whispered close to her ear.

「...Don't make a sound」

「Hii!?」

「I told you not to make a sound」

After an irritated click of tongue, a small light was lit up with a “potsuri”.

「Ah...」

Dimitar who was completely garbed in black came to the middle of the circle of the faint glow.

「Despite coming to rescue you at great pains, everything would be useless if I'm discovered here」

Dimitar helped Valeria up, turned to her back and severed the rope that was binding both her arms.

「...Even so, how did the peerless, albeit imperfect Dominas-sama get caught so easily? You can't say it's because you don't have the experience you know?」

「.....」

Staring at both of her hands which had finally become free, Valeria sniffed.

She hardly heard the boy's question that was mixed with sarcasm. Although she felt a sense of relief at escaping from danger, the current situation which she was in still didn't feel real somewhere.

「—Oi?」

Cutting the rope that was tying her ankles, Dimitar peered into the girl's face.

「What is it? Did they even make you drink some strange drugs?」

「Ah—t, that's not it! I, it's nothing!」

Valeria came to her senses at last, turned her back to Dimitar hurriedly and wiped her face briskly. Speaking of now, though it was too late, she didn't want her face which had traces of tears remaining to be observed fixedly.

When Dimitar slapped his hand on his knee and stood up, he looked down at Valeria and stroked his neck.

「Judging by your appearance...seems like you avoided the situation where you'd lose your Dominas's qualifications」

「I, isn't that obvious! Rather, don't stare at me!」

Valeria concealed her breasts which were in the bustier and the area around her navel with her hands. The tabard and thin dress had been torn off when she was thrown inside here.

「—Your pose will become like that anyway when you use magic right? What're you going to do, feeling shy each time?」

「T, that may be so but—」

It might be because she was exposed to the danger of her chastity that she was probably very sensitive to a man's gaze. Valeria faced her back towards Dimitar and repeatedly took deep breaths many times.

When she calmed down and looked around the area, those boys were unconsciousness and lying down in a corner of the storehouse. Both their hands and feet were tied with the torn jute bags, and even gags were forced into their mouths. Since they were tied around back to back, they probably couldn't slip out so easily even if they woke up.

「—More than that, answer my question」

「Question? ...What is it...?」

「Why were you caught so easily?」

「Ahh!」

Valeria remembered that mysterious needle of light again and hastily spoke to Dimitar.

「M, my magic crests were erased—」

「...What?」

「I, it's true! A strange man used it...it's probably, um...sorcery, or rather, I think it's their magic—」

「Wait a minute」

Dimitar temporarily interrupted Valeria's words and put his hand on his temple.

「Your magic crests were erased? You?」

「...Un」

Even if Valeria felt ashamed to confess her ineptitude to Dimitar, it wasn't good to stay silent. Valeria held out both her hands before Dimitar and concentrated her mind.

「...Hora」

She tried to light up a flame on her fingertip, but the remaining magic crests on both her hands only released weak lights and couldn't even create a fire like the glow of a firefly.

「Certainly...the magic crests on the backs of your hands are completely gone」

「A strange man did this. ...I think that guy is probably Hokon」

「Your magic crests were erased when that needle pierces you huh.
Only the magic crests on both hands were erased?」

「There're also my right knee and—」

When Valeria hesitated to speak a little, Dimitar maintained a triumphant expression.

「Is it your forehead or your chest? If the magic crests on those places were erased, then even if you've other magic crests remaining elsewhere, you can't use magic satisfactorily」

「.....」

Valeria nodded silently, folded her arms and covered her cleavage.

「This...what'll become of me...?」

「Don't ask me」

Cutting down the words of Valeria who was shaking anxiously, Dimitar stoked his neck.

「I also haven't heard of such case. There's no way that I'll know what'll become of you when I haven't even investigate in detail. ...Or would you want me to cheer you up by saying "it'd work out somehow or another"?」

「W, who would!?!」

「Fun」

Dimitar looked at Valeria who had unconsciously raised her voice and laughed slightly. He removed the clasp of the scabbard on his waist and faced the door.

「—As an emergency measure, I may be able to connect one part of your magic crests that were erased at least」

「R, really!?!」

「...You seem to have completely forgotten my social position.」

「Ah, that's right...」

The image of Dimitar wielding the gigantic sword was too strong and she had started to forget, but he was originally Valeria's exclusive Hiera Glaphicos.

「I've memorised all of the composition images of your magic crests. Though it's impossible to draw new magic crests from scratch, it isn't so difficult to simplify them to some extent and reproduce them. —Maa, our priority is to escape from here safely first!」

「T, that's right! What about that kid? Bettina!」

「She's safe. She's waiting for us to return outside the town」

Dimitar took the lead and exited the storehouse. He suddenly looked back and gazed at the side of Valeria's waist.

「L, like I said, what is it!? I told you not to stare at me!」

Valeria's face turned red and she tried to hide her navel and thighs frantically. Dimitar then spoke to her coldly.

「Don't worry. I prefer good matured women who're a bit more fleshy」

「Haa!?」

「That's not what I wanted to say. —Needless to say, your treasured sword was also taken away?」

「Ah—」

「It's fine. Though it was given an exaggerated name, it was a ceremonial sword in the end」

「But...」

「There're always five, six spare treasured swords placed in the magic academy. Do you know?」

「It's my first time hearing it...」

「There seem to be plenty of Dominas who dropped and broke them or forgot to maintain them and let them rusted. Basically, those sheltered girls don't know the handling of a sword」

「So that's how it is」

Staring at the back of Dimitar who was climbing up the narrow staircase, Valeria smiled as she felt relieved. Perhaps Dimitar had such a talk to mitigate Valeria's feelings of guilt.

Valeria immediately denied that notion.

If Dimitar was worried about Valeria, then it wasn't an action that stemmed from his consideration towards her, but would be for the sake of his own success. Dimitar had said so from the beginning. Fundamentally, this boy was an egotist through and through.

Therefore, the fact that she felt relieved and almost complained when she saw Dimitar's face just now could never be revealed to him.



On the very same day, the pedlars in Roma were summoned to the royal castle. It was after the night had gotten late that they had finished their meeting with the crown prince and went back. It could be said to be an exception that the crown prince had met the merchants personally rather than the Minister of Finance.

Even after that meeting had ended, the crown prince took the ministers along this time and moved to the office without going to bed.

「—The fact that communication from Seriba has ceased since the first report arrived means that it's in that much state of emergency. I

think we ought to send reinforcement at once and rescue our countrymen in Serbia from Bigerou's barbaric believers.]

Military Minister Garido-kyou's moustache quivered and he stressed so. Garido-kyou of the armed struggle clique, which had run through numerous battlefields with the current king, had been consistently insisting to dispatch troops from the start.

「B, but...to plan against Bigerou now is—」

That the Finance Minister looked sullen was probably from worrying about the effect on the national budget due to raising unexpected war expenditure rather than foreign relations.

「Is it a question of money? You aren't going to say "what'll happen to the budget if Serbia really falls" are you?」

Shaking the quill pen with a “fuwa fuwa”, the Crown Prince Jeffren Isaac looked at the Finance Minister.

「I, it's not like I speak of budget's matters only—」

「Obviously, even I don't intend to disregard the budget and advance things」

Putting down the quill pen, Isaac stood up. He looked over the ministers who were seated at the huge table, coughed lightly and continued.

「—The ones whom I've met a while ago were merchants who come and go between our country and Bigerou. And so, I thought of having them provide various information」

Although there was no official diplomatic relations, people would cross over long distances, mountains or deserts if wealth could be generated in that place. Ironically, those who were the most well-informed in Bigerou's state of affairs weren't people who were engaged in politics, but the merchants who moved by calculating profit and loss.

「Bigerou has no intention to invade our country」

When Isaac declared so, the ministers exchanged surprised looks.

「I, is that true!?」

「Putting together the different talks that I heard from several merchants, I've concluded it to be so. ...Bigerous has no intention to invade out country. At the present at least」

「P, please let us hear your basis for concluding so」

When the Home Minister who was prone to worrying asked, Isaac left the table and moved to the window.

「—It seems that the barbaric emperor Gorgorois is ill」

「Ill!?」

「Ma, that old man has passed the age of 60 already so it's a credible story. It's because he clings onto the throne indefinitely despite even having a grandchild already that it turned out like this」

「T, then, Seriba's rebellion is—?」

「U—...I think it isn't directly related to Bigerou. If their barbaric emperor is bedridden with illness, then to be honest, Seriba might be out of question」

「But Your Highness」

Combing down his splendid moustache, Garido spoke in a solemn tone.

「Conversely, there's a likelihood of Bigerou plotting the rebellion in Seriba to prevent us from moving troops towards them during this opportunity」

「That's correct of course. But in either case, I can say this much. — The current Bigerou doesn't have the leeway to cross over that

mountain range and dispatch soldiers to our country.]

The crown prince turned over the curtain and viewed the night sky outside the window. Looking back at the ministers over his shoulder, he expressed a calm smile which felt out-of-place when considering the current agenda.

「—Garido-kyou, will you please organise an army to rescue Seriba at once? I'll leave the selection of the commander to you. You've already prepared ahead to some extent right?」

「Though provisions and warhorses have been prepared in accordance to Your Highness's instructions, ...is it fine not to wait for His Majesty's return?」

「It doesn't matter. —And Kamunyas-kyou, among the merchants whom I've sent back some time ago, will you please call back the one who has the most influence in Bigerou secretly?」

「I shall do so, but for what reason exactly...?」

「Let him accompany the reinforcement and prepare in case Bigerou protests something. Say that the objective of this time's military movement is to the end, quell an internal rebellion and not violate the national border. There's the possibility of being turned away at the door if it's only our truce bearer, but if the merchant who has pull in Bigerou is there, the story might be different.」

「B, but...what shall we do in case they still don't accept?」

「At that time, disregard them. The other side can't mobilise army anyway. If we convey our reason, the just cause stands with us at the critical moment.」

「A, at the critical moment...?」

When Kamunyas pondered, Isaac waved his hand with a “*hira hira (flutter)*”.

「Don't mind the minor details. —More than that, can everybody get to your respective work at once? The Military Minister will organise the army; the Finance Minister will secure relief supplies to Seriba and revise the budget; the Foreign Minister will draw up a letter addressed to Bigerou and let the merchant carry it. Is that clear?」

「As you wish」

Garido bowed exaggeratedly and left the office. The Finance Minister and Foreign Minister also followed him at a quick pace.

Kamunyas saw them off, wiped the sweat on his forehead and sighed. He approached the crown prince who stood by the window, lowered his voice and asked.

「...W, will we make it in time?」

「Who knows? I'm amateurish in the military aspect」

「That can't be...is Your Highness not the leader of the Seal Chivalric Order (*Furigana: Templar Aegis*) too?!」

「Everyone knows that I'm a decorative leader. I just become the leader because there's such tradition. Substantially, Lucius consolidates it and I only say『I'll leave it up to you』even during manoeuvres」

「Y, Your Highness...」

「I'm alright」

The crown prince clapped on Kamunyas's shoulder and smiled optimistically.

「We can avoid the worst case. Probably」

「W, when you say the worst case...is it the fall of Seriba and an outbreak of war with Bigerou...? Or that the rebellion will spread to other towns?」

「...Nee, Home Minister」

Isaac gazed out of the window, and if one had to say, a puzzled look spread across his slender face that resembled his mother's. He then looked down at Kamunyas.

「Somehow it's that, you see. It looks like your sense of values is too different from mine」

「Ha...?」

「Perhaps you're too pessimistic and I'm too optimistic. —I thought it'd almost never become the army's turn if it went smoothly. And in the worst case, Costacurta-geika got injured, escaped and returned」

「T, that's as expected...pardon my words but, is that thought not asking a little too much...?」

「Then I remembered. The white roses which I recently bought from a Diruma's merchant have aphids on it immediately. If I don't get rid of them quickly」

Clapping his hands with a “pon”, Isaac left Kamunyas behind and exited from the office.

「Though their characters are completely different, His Highness is surely His Majesty's child. They're important people in various meanings...」

Seeing off Isaac who ran to tend to his roses right after discussing a national crisis, Kamunyas dropped his shoulders with a gloomy sigh.



Hokon kicked the boys who were lying in the underground storehouse in a fit of anger and returned above ground.

「Don't let her escape! She shouldn't have gone so far yet! A Dominas whose magic is sealed is simply a girl! Capture her before

she's rescued by the mayor's side at all costs! If that's impossible, then kill her!」

「Ha, haa!—」

Were they surprised by Hokon's angry expression? The soldiers scattered in a hurry.

In a room which was used as a study by this mansion's original owner, Hokon sat down on a sofa which was placed before a bookshelf for reading purposes and took off his gauntlets. This study became Hokon's living room after he had occupied this place.

「The Dominas who was once captured slipped through the tight vigilance net and returned alive splendidly...meaning this's the worst case where she'll encourage the enemies instead」

「！」

Hokon, who had sighed greatly and looked up at the ceiling, shook his shoulders with a start at that voice that he heard suddenly.

「...I did told you not to take a Dominas lightly」

A woman, who was dressed in black from head to toe and had been standing unnoticed in the corner of the room, rebuked the rebel army's ringleader so.

「...Medou huh」

Hokon, who was about to reach his hands out for the gauntlets that he had just taken off, settled down on the sofa again as he clearly felt relieved.

「I'm not making light of the Dominas in particular. This "trump card" which you've given me is certainly effective. As long as I've this, a Dominas isn't worth fearing; magic warriors too of course. This isn't making light of them, but the undeniable truth」

「Then how was she able to escape?」

「That's...」

The tone of a proud Hokon suddenly became depressed. The woman in black cape watched that and smiled coldly. She drew near the study desk and picked up the books that were piled up there.

「...A Dominas is always accompanied by her Hiera Glaphicos」

「Hiera Glaphicos? Ah...I definitely received a report of a youngster acting as her guard and following close to her but—is it only a Hiera Glaphicos?」

Hokon combed down his moustache and laughed.

「You mean to say that Hiera Glaphicos came here alone and rescued the Dominas?」

「Whoever had rescued her doesn't matter already. —Apart from that, the problems are the Dominas has escaped and there's no report of that Hiera Glaphicos being killed」

「...What?」

「When the magic crests which are carved onto a Dominas's skin becomes damaged due to injuries, the role of an exclusive Hiera Glaphicos is to perform restoration of them on the spot. —What'll you do if the two of them link up? If you carelessly give them time, the magic crests which you've erased at great pains might be restored」

「I won't give them that much time!」

Hokon struck the armrest with his fist, placed the water jug directly to his mouth and drank the water in one gulp.

「...We've gained control of 70 to 80 percent of the town already. They've to break through the line of defence which was laid out by us to reach the town hall!」

「It isn't limited to taking refuge in the town hall. What'll you do if they cross over the rampart and escape out of town?」

「I've mobilised all personnel who can carry weapons. To say nothing of the defence line, I've already stationed empty-handed people on the rampart too. —I'll say this beforehand, Medou」

Hokon nervously rubbed his hands together in front of his chest and stared at Medou.

「...I know you approached me and offered assistance to use me with some sort of intentions. Where your true aim lies is of no concern of mine. Do as you like. —However, I only won't allow you to hinder me」

「...It'd be great if even half of that arrogance is accompanied by good results」

When Medou closed the book, the corner of the room became faintly bright. The book in her hand had abruptly burst into flames and turned to ashes in the twinkling of an eye.

Spilling the little remaining ashes from her hand with a “sara sara”, Medou muttered.

「If you can make the best use of this chance and truly make a comeback to your motherland's military authorities, we shall assist you hereafter too. But if you even have trouble dealing with a novice Dominas and her Hiera Glaphicos, then you don't have the value which you think you have. End your life on the soil of a foreign country with the devotees who believed and followed you」

「You...who do you think you are!?」

Hokon got up from the sofa, put on the gauntlets and pointed at Medou.

「Is it Haiderota or Bito!? At any rate, you're the spy of some country that wants to undermine Amaddo's hegemony right?! You're

a petty thief who makes our country fight against Amaddo and tries to obtain benefits while others fight. Don't speak conceitedly!」

「Our country? You're the defeated who was ousted from the country; where's this "our country" that you spoke of?」

「—」

Hokon's complexion which had become red from anger suddenly turned pale.

「Though you called me a petty thief, you got the help of that petty thief and tries to return to his motherland somehow; what does that makes you then? This goes beyond awkward and laughable; you're pathetic」

「—Shut up!」

Hokon moved his right hand lightly and connected the path of magical power. A needle of white light shot out from his fingertip.

However, Medou just shook the curtain behind her and disappeared from the spot before it pierced her chest.

「!？」

Hokon hurriedly looked around, but the figure of a person who was dressed completely in black wasn't anywhere. There was literally no silhouette or figure of her and she had vanished.

Hokon undid one button of his collar, breathed deeply and greatly, and left the study at a quick pace.

◆◆◆

Her side became even more painful.

Her side had heated up and even the hand holding it down became hot.

Even if she had thought of running as quietly as possible, the breathing which escaped from her mouth became rough after all. Honestly, she was in a state where she barely even followed Dimitar who had kept his speed in check considerably and ran.

It was agonising, and she wanted to stop and rest immediately. She wanted to lie down on a cushion bed or a sofa. Even if that was impossible, she wanted to drink a mouthful of water at least and take a breath.

But when she saw the back of the youth who kept running silently with the drawn gigantic sword in one hand, she couldn't complain so.

It wasn't because Dimitar was persevering that she must do likewise. Dimitar used to be an underling of the Seal Chivalric Order, thus he might have confidence in his stamina. Above all, he was unhurt unlike Valeria, so it was natural for him to run calmly.

The fact that Dimitar completely didn't look back on Valeria, who couldn't use magic and to make matters worse, had cracked ribs, irritated her somehow. Rather, even if Valeria didn't say anything, she thought that Dimitar ought to stop his feet and call for a rest at least. Though he was well versed in worldly affairs, he was really rude and insensitive—or rather, he was a boy who didn't try to exercise tact.

However, it was precisely because the other party was Dimitar that Valeria couldn't complain.

As a Dominas, she had more pride than others, thus she couldn't show her weakness to the boy who was incompatible with her. Besides losing her magic, if she was to borrow help from someone—what's more, if it was this wicked tongue youngster of all things—it'd be frustrating and Valeria truly wouldn't be able to get back to her feet.

Hence Valeria gritted her teeth and kept running. She fixed her eyes on Dimitar's back and moved her feet resolutely without knowing where she was heading in the night town's back alleys.

However—.

Her side became even more painful.

Even her hand which was holding it down became hot.

The same thought looped inside her head many times over and over again, and when most of her thinking process was paralysed by pain and fatigue, Valeria crashed into Dimitar's back and fell on her bottom.

「Taa...! W, w, why, did you...s, sud, den, ly—」

Playing innocent that she had thought of 「It's about time you stop your feet and rest, idiot!」 until a while ago, Valeria tried to rebuke Dimitar who had stopped suddenly. But new pain ran through her side from the impact of falling on her bottom, and her words became incoherent.

Looking down on Valeria, who was biting her lips which had turned pure white and was anguishing, Dimitar narrowed his eyes.

「You—」

Dimitar quickly squatted down and casually pull off the mantle that he made Valeria wear.

「W, what—!?」

「Are you an idiot? If you can handle the strain, then there's no need to report it. But if you can't handle it, then don't hide it. And in such an emergency too」

Dimitar muttered irritably and his gaze fixed upon Valeria's bare side.

「It's quite an internal bleeding...did it happened when you were caught?」

「...Un」

「Did you vomit blood?」

「That, I didn't...」

「So it wasn't fractured—」

「I'm, fine...!」

The current shock cleared up her foggy mind. Although it was only for about a minute, she was able to sit down and rest. If she had said that she couldn't stand up as it is (*due to the injury*) or that she couldn't run anymore, the boy before her would look down with condescending cold eyes, and definitely speak sarcastically with an expression that was unthinkable to the naive Valeria.

Valeria inhaled a lungful of breath quietly and tried to stand up.

「I...won't become, something like a burden, so—」

「That's why I said you're an idiot」

「Ha...?」

「...If you're a burden, I just have to throw you behind. It's because you're someone who can't be thrown away that I haven't done so」

「Y, you...」

「Similarly, if I sustained a deep wound in a fight and can't run properly, you can regard me as a burden and discard me. In that way, even if it's just you, it's my duty that you live and return. But the opposite doesn't applies」

「You...can't you, phrase it a bit better, somehow...?」

While putting her hands on her laps and adjusting her breaths, Valeria glared up at Dimitar.

「Unfortunately, this isn't a situation where I can care about a person whom I can't stand」

Dimitar looked around the surroundings and curved his lips.

「—Because you put on strange airs and run slowly, the enemy line's defence should be strengthened already. I had thought of taking refuge in the mayor's place quickly, but that might be impossible」

「...It's my fault?」

「In the first place, it wouldn't have become like this if you weren't caught」

「...Who's my guard again?」

「Who knows. But if it's the name of the fellow who disregarded my opinion when I insisted that we should return to the capital, then I remember it」

「.....」

Valeria glared at Dimitar for a while, sighed greatly and got up.

「...I'll appeal directly to the Head Director when I return to the capital. I'll definitely get her to change to another Hiera Glaphicos!」

「Then you've to live and return first」

Dimitar turned his back towards Valeria and squatted down.

「It's impossible to move any further without being detected. I'll carry you on my back. ...You might make a good target for the novice archers with your current slowness」

Valeria furrowed her brow and brushed up her hairs that clung onto her forehead and cheeks in sweat.

「Don't joke around...! I'm, not a child!」

「If you hate being treated as a child, I can also treat you as a log and carry you on my shoulder. In that case, your side will suffer from the burden and it'll hurt considerably, but are you okay with that?」

「...Eh?」

「The third choice is to carry you in my arms instead of on my back. Even if we're attacked by surprise from the back, you won't be injured; meaning this's probably the best」

「Are you serious...!」

「This's my minimal compassion. I'm letting Your Eminence-sama choose. To be carried on my back, be a log, or be carried in my arms? —I'll carry you in my arms if you can't decide at once」

「I, I don't need you to do that!」

「Then decide quickly. I can't treat your side unless we escape to a safe location」

「...Or rather, you can use healing magic?」

「I can't」

「Then don't put on airs!」

Enduring the pain and shouting close to Dimitar's ear, Valeria nervously clung onto the boy's back. Being the same age as Valeria, Dimitar's back was by no means wide, but even so, she felt that it was extremely big.

Putting on the mantle after carrying Valeria on his back, Dimitar brought its four corners to the front of his body, tied them tightly, and stood up.

「You're lighter than I thought」

「...That, are you praising me?」

「I'm not praising or speaking ill of you. I'm just saying my thought honestly」

「...I really dislike you」

「Iya, I probably dislike you more. This isn't related to gender, but I can't stand fellows who speak of things that they couldn't do. —But then, I don't intend to bring in my personal feelings into my duty so be at ease. And Lucius also requested me to protect you only even if I die」

「Lucius-sama did?」

Feeling that she had heard that name after a long time, Valeria's heart fluttered without knowing the situation.

「If you die, the Head Director's position will be lost and Lucius will also be troubled」

Dimitar shook Valeria lightly and started running nimbly. It was surely faster than just now. Since he hadn't rely on magic yet with this, it affected her annoyingly, but Dimitar was certainly not a boy who was just all talk.

Valeria coughed a little with a "kohon" and asked.

「...What food does Lucius-sama likes?」

「Ha?」

「The food that he likes...you should know right?」

「I won't say that I don't know, but you're asking that now?」

Dimitar was heard clicking his tongue.

「—If you're going to ask such pointless question, then it's better to sleep without a care if possible」

「T, there's no way that I can sleep in this situation!?」

「Then don't ask such question. In this situation」

Dimitar wielded his sword. Magical power ran through the magic crests which were applied on the boy's right hand and sword, and

radiated strongly. The “Double Power” magic which was the basic in the Seal Chivalric Order lifted the pair’s body weight up to a private house’s roof.

「—You see anything?」

Lying down on the roof, Dimitar asked in a low voice.

「There’re things resembling lights here and there... But they seems to be moving—」

「They’re pursuers carrying torches」

Lights that looked like a red chain extending thinly could be seen in the north of the town. Perhaps they were lines of defence which divided both camps’ sphere of influence—it might be the rampart that separated the old and new town areas. Unfortunately, it wasn’t the stationing troops who were maintaining that line, but the rebel army. Though the rebel army could face their enemy’s camp from there and advance its military force freely, the opposite (*for the mayor’s side to do likewise*) was already impossible.

「...As I thought, it’s impossible to head to the town hall like this」

「W, what shall we do?」

「After we get out of the town and meet up with Gacha Pink, we’ll move to a safe location and fix whichever magic crests that I can fix」

「.....」

It was a natural remark as a Hiera Glaphicos. That was an act to regain the magic power which was lost for Valeria whose magic crests were erased here and there. In fact, it should be something to be delighted about.

Despite this, she couldn’t express a face full of smile and feel pleased. It was because she’d be greatly indebted to this boy, and that she was simply still reluctant to have her skin touched here and there

later.

「—Let's go」

Indifferent to Valeria's conflict, Dimitar began to move again.

Chapter 05 - A Worthless Thing

In mythical times, there were 12 magic warriors who endeavoured to seal the “**Demon (Furigana: Marouido)**” with Redountra. As a leader, each of them guided their people and raised 12 countries in various places of the continent. These countries were the beginning of the current “**Holy Alliance (Furigana: Riga Santourear)**”. It was because there was originally one girl in each of the 12 countries that there were always 12 Dominas.

At the present when everything was reduced to being myths, the 12 allies had become 7 as a result of destruction and annexation, and merger. But even now, they were continuing the surveillance of the seal of the “**Demon**”.

Since the allies had decreased, the current Amaddo possessed 3 Dominas that a country formerly had one.



Among them was Valeria Costacurta who was referred to as the once-in-10-years talented woman.

She felt that a very long time had passed, but in fact, 6 hours hadn’t even passed since Valeria arrived in this town. In any case, the night had yet to grow light.

But although the silence wasn’t that different like the beginning, the atmosphere which filled the surroundings had changed completely. Even Valeria understood that the whole town was enveloped by a tense atmosphere. Perhaps this might be what was called the thirst for blood.

「...Yare yare」

Dimitar moved on the roof in an extremely low posture, clicked his tongue and stopped his feet.

There were lights burning alone in the night sky. Though its distinct silhouette which had slipped into the darkness wasn't visible, there was a rampart not so far away, and countless watch fires were burning on top of it. When straining one's eyes very much, there were soldiers who shouldered spears wandering about near the firelight.

「...It wasn't like that when we arrived here!」

Valeria muffled her voice and said so.

「Of course. It was the old town that's more to the north where we first crossed over the rampart. That place was still the territory of the mayor's side after all」

Hiding in the shadow of a gable, Dimitar stoked his neck. Valeria noticed it since she was being carried on his back like this, but somehow it seemed that this boy had the habit of stroking his neck at the drop of a hat.

「Nevertheless, it's highly risky to pass through the enemy line and head to the town hall. ...In that case, it's quicker and easier to force our way through here」

「Force...eh? I, in this state?」

「It's because it's this state. It's still fine now, but we'll be discovered shortly once dawn breaks. Those guys probably won't capture you alive the next time. If they encircle our surroundings and shoot arrows simultaneously, setting me aside, it's doubtful whether I can even protect you who are on my back」

「J, just a minute! I wish you wouldn't joke!」

「I'm not joking. —If it's now, we may still take advantage of the darkness somehow. We'll approach in one go, jump over the rampart and take refuge in the forest」

「C, can you do that?」

「I can. However, the danger increases as time passes. Like I said earlier, we'll be conspicuous at any rate once it becomes bright, and even my stamina doesn't last forever」

It was due to the assistance of magic that Dimitar, who had carried Valeria on his back the whole time since some time ago and moved, didn't muddle up his breathing a lot. But even that had its limit. Although maintaining a state like this where certain magic was activated for a long time continuously was plain, it was far more difficult than making one shot of showy magic explode.

Stroking his neck lightly, Dimitar stood up.

「—Shall we go?」

「Eh!? Just a minute? A, are you serious!? What about my opinion —」

「I wasn't seeking for your opinion from the start. Either way, you only have to be carried by me. So that I want to do it, let me do it with the method that I think seems to have the highest success rate」

「Then why did you specially explained it!?」

「...Now that you mention it, you're right. From next time onward, I'll move without explaining」

「Don't j...!」

「You're noisy. Do you intend to inform the enemies of our location before we get closer?」

Dimitar held back Valeria who tried to shout and rushed out from the gable's shadow. Her body jolted to the left and right, and the pain in her side which had started to settle temporarily recurred.

「Tsu—!」

「If you're going to shout, then pray to Redountra. Unlike me, you're devout right?」

Though Valeria didn't know whether Dimitar who had muttered so was showing his usual cold smile, he was probably smiling.

Dimitar, who had received the support of magic, sped towards the rampart while causing the roofs to creak.

「! —Someone is coming!」

Valeria stretched her neck eagerly and looked at the rampart over Dimitar's shoulder.

In addition to the watch fires, she slightly saw that many torches were swaying. The soldiers on the rampart were moving in a bustle, and there seemed to be also soldiers readying not just spears, but also bows and arrows.

「Over here!」

「The Dominas is here too! Don't let her escape!」

Together with the voices calling out to their comrades, the sounds of the arrows' feathers cutting through the wind ran intermittently.

「...!」

Dimitar stepped greatly and jumped. After several seconds of a floating sensation, a light impact assailed Valeria again.

「This kid—!」

Dimitar landed on the rampart, and soldiers who were holding spears came stabbing at him simultaneously.

「Don't hold up someone who's in a hurry—」

Valeria's field of vision which was coloured by the watch fires rotated dizzily. She saw the gigantic deadly weapon which was carved

with magic crests (*Furigana: Hierateika*) flashed, and the soldiers who raised sprays of blood were blown off.

「Hi—!」

「I said to be quiet right?」

Dimitar cursed at Valeria who had saw the sudden bloodshed and screamed.

Dragging along clamorous sounds of metals crashing into each other, Dimitar started running on the passageway. Casually mowing down the soldiers who tried to obstruct his path, he jumped onto the parapet that towered on both sides of the passageway.

「...This time won't be soft like just now」

「Haii? Eh? W, what!?」

「Since you may feel a jolt in your side, brace yourself so that you don't cry」

「Eh—!？」

Faster than she could understand the meaning of Dimitar's words, a second floating sensation tickled Valeria's bottom. Dimitar had immediately jumped from the rampart towards the forest.

「Pu—」

The watch fires and starlight ebbed into long and narrow beams of light in Valeria's eyes, and immediately after, the pair plunged into the deep black and thick foliage.

「Kuu...!」

Dimitar's left hand reached out and grabbed onto a thick branch. Even if his arm and leg strength could be enhanced due to magic, it didn't mean that his flesh had changed into steel. If he fell as it was, even if he avoided crashing into the ground completely, both of

Dimitar's legs wouldn't be able to withstand the body weight of two people and the acceleration, and would turn into mush.

However, Dimitar separated from the branch at once. While changing his body's direction 180°, he began to fall again from a height of about a two-story house's eaves.

「Why—!？」

Valeria immediately swallowed her words of doubt.

Dimitar might have judged that they'd become an easy target while hanging from the branch that he separated his hand from it at once. Innumerable arrows flew like slanting rain from above the rampart and swooped down on the pair who was in the midst of falling. It wasn't just arrows, but even spears were mixed within.

「They're too wicked...！」

Dimitar swung his sword and flicked off the arrows and spears, but when he bent both his legs and made his body sink deeply to soften the landing's impact, an arrow made a sound and pierced his left shoulder tip.

「Kyaa！」

For Valeria, to suddenly see an arrow sticking out and blood spouting up before her eyes, she couldn't help screaming even if she tried to endure it.

「...Were you hit somewhere?」

「I, I wasn't hit but, y, you—Richternach-kyou! Y, you, you're, p, pierced in the shoulder!」

「It's my own body. ...I understand that even if you don't say it」

Dimitar stood up immediately and hid in the shade of a tree. It could be clearly inferred from his voice's tone which was lowlier

subdued than usual that he was enduring the pain.

「...Kuso...!」

The feet of Dimitar who had escaped into the night forest evidently staggered, and his breathing had also become much rougher.

「Just a minute, nee—」

「...Around here is, my limit, huh—」

Dimitar stopped abruptly, thrust his sword into the ground and fell to his knees with a “gakuri” on the spot.

「Hey...y, you, just have to let me down if it's so tough! We seemed to have successfully shaken off the pursuers too—」

「They won't, give up on pursuit, so easily...before long, they'll assemble a number of people and chase after us—」

When Dimitar laughed sporadically, he untied the knot of the mantle that secured Valeria onto his back.

「Tto...」

Valeria was able to recover her physical strength considerably while being carried on his back, and she stood firmly on both feet though her side worried her. She went round to the front of Dimitar who was still crouched down on the spot and couldn't get up.

「Just a minute...!? What's this!?!」

「...Don't make a noise. We'll be noticed」

Dimitar's body wasn't pierced by only one arrow in his left shoulder. There were two in his abdomen and also two in his right thigh. Each was embedded very deeply and blood seemed to keep on flowing slowly even now.

Valeria immediately went down on her knees and let her gaze

wandered about meaninglessly.

「W, what to do? What shall we do about this?」

「...There's nothing that can be done right now」

「T, then, leave they as they are?」

「Iya...as expected, they're a hindrance」

Dimitar pulled out the knife which was inserted in his boots and cut the stems of the arrows that pierced his abdomen and thigh in the middle. To not have drawn out a breath entirely was probably to prevent any more bleeding than this. When an edged tool was lodged in, the wound would bleed massively and instead shorten one's life upon extracting it thoughtlessly—even Valeria knew this.

Dimitar cut the five arrows short with shaky hands. When he put away the bloodstained knife into its scabbard, he held out the mantle which was taken off messily to Valeria.

「Spread this out...on the flat ground over there」

「You want to lie down? W, wait a moment!」

Valeria held the edge of the mantle and spread it softly.

At that moment, her bottom was kicked from behind.

「Ahya!?!」

She fell forward with a clumsy shriek and something heavy leaned on her bottom with a “nosuu” immediately.

「Baa...w, what're you doing all of a sudden!?!」

It was Dimitar who had straddled Valeria. Although she panicky propped herself up with both hands and tried to get up, pain ran through her side when she exerted strength and she couldn't get rid of Dimitar at all. What she could do at the most was to turn her head

and glared at Dimitar.

「...If you've any complaints, I'll hear them later」

「"Later" you say—stop it! W, what're you intending to do!?」

「You're being noisy. Be quiet」

Dimitar twisted both of Valeria's arms to her back and tied them up tightly with a thin rope while muttering. Continuing further, he bound both her knees and ankles in a state where her feet were placed together. Hence, it became difficult for Valeria to even stand up.

「Y, you...!」

In the state where her cheek was pressed against the ground across the mantle, Valeria concealed her trembling and spoke to the boy.

「What on earth are you planning!? Doing such a thing...!」

「I don't really care that you're strong-willed, but don't cry afterwards」

Dimitar muttered coldly, twisted a cloth slightly and tried to force the gag into Valeria's mouth.

At that moment, she recalled the memory of when she was captured by the rebel army and then thrown into the underground storehouse. Remembering the eyes of the rebel army's boys who had carried a lantern and entered the storehouse, goosebumps rose on her entire body with a "zowari".

「Sto...!」

「It's because you scream like that that the workload increases」

Dimitar said so seemingly irritated and made Valeria bit the gag. Although she shook her body desperately despite the pain in her side, that degree wouldn't make Dimitar move aside.

「...Behave yourself. It's not like I'll eat you whatsoever」

Dimitar leaned over Valeria and whispered close to the girl's ear.

「Though you seem to be misunderstanding something, I told you that I prefer nice older women who have more flesh right? In the first place, do you think there's an idiot who will get in the heat suddenly and push a girl down when he's bleeding from his abdomen and is out of breath?」

Valeria put strength into her glare as if saying “Then what's it!?”.

Dimitar removed the gauntlet on his left hand and both his hands' fingers made a “boki boki (*Onomatopoeic for cracking knuckles*)” sound.

「—Henceforth, I'll restore your magic crests」

「...?」

「With my condition, it's regrettable but it seems that I won't be able to move before joining up with Gacha Pink. Though it doesn't matter if I were to die, you'll be dragged in too at this rate since the current you, besides suffering a wound, also can't use magic」

“Therefore—I'll repair your magic crests as an emergency measure,” said Dimitar.

「I don't know when we'll be discovered by those guys, and I simply don't have the free time to connect all your erased magic crests, so I'll connect the important parts only for the time being. Even if I connect just the magic crests on the back of your right hand and chest, you might be able to use some magic one way or another」

For Valeria who shot magic from her fingertips and palms a lot, the magic crests on the back of her right hand were important. In addition, the magic crest, which bundled the magic crests that were applied on her limbs into one and was carved on the centre of her body—just around her chest, was also equally important.

If she could get the magic crests of those areas restored, Valeria would be able to use magic again. It was the best news in the current situation where her life was targeted by enemies.

But compensation was needed for that.

「.....」

Valeria's throat made a gulping sound behind the gag.

The procedure of carving magic crests onto the body was accompanied with a pain as though one was cut by an edged tool.

They were carved onto Valeria's body—the bodies of the girls who aimed to be a Dominas from when they were a child little by little. In the process of applying magic crests of manyfold of an average magic warrior, there weren't few girls who couldn't endure that pain and ran away. That was so, even if there were several proficient Hiera Glaphicos who worked while alleviating the pain by means of magic.

And she was told that it'd be done once more here and now; moreover, she had to entrust everything to this sharp-tongued, insolent and incompatible boy whom she had just met recently.

Although a Hiera Glaphicos was said to restore a Dominas's magic crests originally, there was scarcely a full-scale restoration. As there was only one Hiera Glaphicos, the pain couldn't be alleviated while restoring the magic crests. To put it in terms of an injury's treatment, this might be giving first aid at most.

In short, Dimitar was trying to perform a simple operation at this place without anaesthesia.

When Valeria was hesitating, Dimitar spoke as if he had seen through her mind.

「Are you hesitating on what to do? ...Unfortunately, your thoughts are inconsequential under these circumstances. I've to do this while I'm conscious」

Dimitar continued in seemingly self-mockery, and his hand gripped the right hand of Valeria whose movement was sealed.

Immediately after that, a sharp pain ran through the back of her hand. It was such a pain where she thought that her skin was sliced off finely with a knife, like peeling an apple's skin.

「...Tsu!」

She stifled a scream of agony behind the gag and stiffened her whole body. Valeria knew that cold sweats were oozing out suddenly from her white skin.

「Don't struggle. ...Even if it's like this, I'm neutralising the pain more or less」

Dimitar grasped Valeria's hand with a strong force and while holding it down firmly, he drew a line on her skin with his fingertip. Valeria struggled and writhed to escape from that pain, but Dimitar pinned her down with arm strength only and continued to work silently.

Inside her mind that had boiled gradually, Valeria understood why Dimitar had tied her up and even made her bite on a gag. If her body was unrestrained, perhaps Valeria might have screamed in a voice which was audible even outside the forest and rampaged.

After that, exactly how many minutes had passed?

Dimitar finally stood up.

Her right hand was already numbed, and the fact that she couldn't feel most of the pain after the midpoint might be the only saving grace. As she had stiffened her entire body's muscles the whole time, she accumulated a fatigue as if she had sprint a long distance with her all, and her whole body was bathed in perspiration. The most unpleasant thing was that the Dominas's "uniform" with little area had absorbed her cold sweat and was soaking wet.

「...Next, if I connect some of the magic crests on your chest, you'll be able to use magic」

In that case, she'd be able to neutralise the pain by herself and treat her side. Dimitar turned the girl's body face up while saying so.

「Once you can use magic and have treated your wound to some extent, escape at once」

Dimitar straddled Valeria's waist again.

「...Gacha Pink and the horses ought to be waiting at the vicinity where we first sneaked in. When you join up, return to the capital immediately. Don't try to do any unnecessary meritorious deed」

「.....」

「...Live and return, and report, that magic which erases magic crests to the Head Director. That's the most important matter」

Dimitar extended his hands towards Valeria's chest and began to undo the string of her bustier. It was supposed to be unpleasant to the point where she'd die to have such a thing done by a man whom she didn't like, and yet Valeria strangely didn't think of resisting. To begin with, it was because she was totally exhausted and didn't have such physical strength, and her mind was also befuddled.

However, the best reason was probably because she somehow didn't feel the fear or repulsiveness which she had felt in the rebel army's soldiers in that storehouse within Dimitar.



Above all, she thought that it was even absurd to worry like that when seeing the current Dimitar. Previously, even such a thought of whether this boy could accomplish the restoration of her magic crests came to her mind.

Dimitar's face was pale to that extent.

The hands of the boy who tried to undo the bustier's string were becoming wet and deep red with blood. Midway, he often wiped his hands around his waist since his fingertips were slipping due to the blood. It wasn't because Valeria perspired that a jarring "gucha gucha" sound was made, but because Dimitar's lower half of his body was absorbing a lot of blood and was dripping wet.

He was clearly bleeding heavily.

Nonetheless, Dimitar somehow undid the bustier's string and slid it down.

「...Be at ease. The important parts aren't visible」

Did he notice that Valeria stiffened her body for a moment? Dimitar laughed.

「...!」

She didn't have the time to feel disgusted as that pain attacked her again.

「Don't move...don't struggle—」

Dimitar repeated it like a charm and a bluish black complex pattern emerged on his right arm. The technique for restoring magic crests was also an advanced magic.

Dimitar's finger slid over Valeria's white skin. A faint red line extended from her cleavage which rose and fell gently to her collarbone. Furthermore, it went past her shoulder and connected to the magic crest of her fingertips from her right upper arm.

「Nmu—！」

A pain that was in a wider scope than a while ago was produced.

But Valeria didn't struggle anymore. No matter how much pain she was in, Dimitar would never stop his hand until the stopgap treatment ended.

Hence Valeria only thought of the moment when the magic crests' restoration ended, bit the gag and endured the pain.

♦♦♦

「Fuguu! Ugugugu...！」

A spasm attacked Bettina, who had brushed the bodies of the two horses and taken a short rest, yet again and caused her to ooze cold sweat.

「I, I want to pee—」

Perhaps due to a mental reason, Bettina had to go to the toilet often. She was troubled by this since she was really young. It couldn't be said that this matter was completely irrelevant to the girl being adopted by her uncle and was living with him.

In any case, feeling the urge to urinate upon becoming a little tense was quite a fatal "chronic disease" for the girl who was approaching adulthood.

「Uuuu...Dimitar-san still hasn't come back—」

Bettina rubbed her thighs together skilfully while wearing the armour and put up with the urge to urinate.

「I, I'll quickly take off this armour now and—hyawaa!?」

Just when she started thinking of going to relieve herself stealthily, she felt that she had heard men's voices from somewhere and ducked her head. She pushed her way through the thicket and went towards

the town. When she examined the situation secretly, there were many lights flickering on the rampart.

「Ababababa...! W, was Dimitar-san discovered by any chance—!?」

Noticing that the enemies' movement had become hurried, Bettina's tension rose even higher. Naturally, she was further cornered by the physiological phenomenon.

「I, if pushed to the utmost limits, a person's willpower can control the body freely! —Though I heard something like that, it's impossible, Oji-sama! In the first place, my will is weak!」

Bettina returned to the horses and stamped with a “gacha gacha”.

「W-w, what to do? If I'm found by the enemies at such a place—I, I'll definitely wet myselffff!」

At this unpleasant premonition, Bettina lost her composure more and more. She then noticed the horses which were casually grazing on the grass lifted their heads and twitched their ears all together, and stopped her movements quickly. She felt that she had sensed faint footsteps different from her serious ones.

「...!」

Bettina took the retractable battle axe which was equipped behind her waist and focused on the darkness from across her visor. Though it was unlikely that the enemies who should be fighting for supremacy in the town would appear suddenly and unexpectedly from inside the forest, there was also the worst case scenario.

Bettina grasped the battle axe that transformed Bachururus's power into an even more brutal fighting power and put herself on guard.

At her rear—directly close by this time—was a “kasari” sound of grass being stepped on.



Though it felt like it took several hours, it actually might have taken no more than 30 minutes.

Even when Dimitar cut the ropes on her limbs and got up sluggishly, Valeria couldn't move from that spot for a while.

「.....」

A night wind brushed her skin that was covered in cold sweat. A coldness which she didn't experience until some time ago attacked her abruptly and Valeria shivered.

Valeria got up slowly, removed the gag and threw it away.

「...Try it」

Dimitar leaned against a tree trunk apparently in affliction, sat down and said in a hoarse voice. He probably meant to use magic to see if the magic crests were properly restored.

「Before that」

Valeria wiped the sweat of her whole body with the mantle that she picked up. When she pulled up the bustier that had slipped off, she approached Dimitar in strides and slapped the side of his face with all her might.

「—Your method was rough! It's painful and you're heavy! And you've no delicacy! If I can't use magic well with this, I'll give you another slap!」

Valeria who had kept on talking loudly turned her back to Dimitar and moved her right hand lightly. Magical power began to flow from around her cleavage to her right fingertips via her shoulder instantly. Due to this flow of magical power forming magic squares, magic surfaced.

「...They're connected, if I've to say so」

Although complex magic squares of that extent—namely magic crests, were necessary to use advanced magic, by moving the magic crests to induce the flow of magical power, complex magic squares could also be drawn with simple magic crests. The current Valeria couldn't use significant magic without such process.

Nevertheless, being able to use magic somehow was greatly different from being unable to use it entirely.

「...Fuu」

Turning over the reference books inside her mind and recalling the magic square of healing magic, she neutralised the pain at her side. The pain which was tingling with heat subsided gently and it became considerably easy to breathe.

Valeria took a breath with a “hoo” and looked down on her appearance again. In any case, since her tabard and dress were taken away, she was lightly dressed in just a bustier and hot-pants. Even those were also soaking wet in sweat and blood, and she might catch a cold at this rate. She wanted to retrieve her luggage quickly and change her clothes.

「We shall meet up with Bettina then, Richternach-kyou—」

When she could finally regain the initiative, Valeria turned around to Dimitar with a face full of joy. She became startled and opened her eyes wide.

It was because Dimitar had fallen face-down.

「It, it's a lie right!? I didn't hit you so strongly...i, iya, though I did hit you with all my might, even so, to end up like this—」

「...Are you an idiot?」

Dimitar smiled bitterly at the flustered Valeria and got up with a “yorori”.

「It's normal to collapse if one bleeds this much...」

「W, what're you saying now? I can't believe you! You're irresponsible!」

「I don't care if I die here, but it'd be bad if you were to die. Therefore, use your magic minimally so that you can escape somehow...that's enough, so meet up with Gacha Pink quickly, run away—」

「I, I can't just leave you behind right!?!」

「It's your responsibility to do so...」

「You...a, aren't you strange!?!」

Dimitar leaned on the tree again. Valeria held his nape—it looked like it was already getting slick with blood—and said.

「Why're you going that far? You can't put up with me right?」

「This and that are different matters」

The weak sigh which came out from Dimitar's mouth reeked of blood.

「That might be so theoretically, but it's human's nature to not actually do so isn't it!?!」

「Don't say pretty words and escape immediately. ...You also hate me right...?」

「...Tsu」

The half-dead boy retorted with a cavil and Valeria became speechless.

Valeria definitely didn't like Dimitar and she fully understood that the other party also thought of her that way. However, Valeria couldn't become completely cold-hearted to forsake Dimitar here and

escape. Dimitar had rescued Valeria and prioritised the restoration of her magic crests over his own treatment. It was certainly his duty, but the original cause was that Valeria had disregarded Dimitar's opinion of returning to the capital at once, arbitrarily went ahead and then got caught by Hokon.

Valeria furrowed her brow, pulled Dimitar's arm and made him stand up.

「...What're you planning to do?」

「If you're bleeding heavily, be quiet...!」

She lent her shoulder to Dimitar and began to walk slowly, but it was quite a hard labour for the powerless Valeria.

「...Normally」

「Be quiet!」

「Iya—」

「I said don't talk! You'll waste that much stamina!」

「If you're going to read so much into it, then stop the bleeding first」

「B, but—」

Although the arrows which were stuck inside must be extracted to stop the bleeding, the degree of difficulty of that task, which was one step short of an operation, was too high for Valeria who didn't want to see blood if possible.

「It's fine if you can't do it but...to not stop the bleeding and take me around; do you intend to hasten my time of death?」

「I'll take you and return...!」

「Why?」

「It'll be troubling if I don't have you work hard after this—」

「...What's that? A confession of your twisted love?」

「Don't say, stupid things, ...!」

Until now, Dimitar always treated her as if she was simple. She was derisively laughed at for being ignorant of the ways of the world, and though her position should be higher, she was callously instructed on this and that; her bottom was kicked on and her chest was touched; they were utterly painful experiences.

In addition, if she were to abandon Dimitar, she'd end up burdening and living with the vexation of being unable to get even and the guilt of making him into a sacrifice forever hereafter. Undoubtedly, that'd be much heavier than the body of Dimitar whom she was now lending a shoulder to like this.

「...In the first place, why'd you strain your body this far if you dislike me? You said that it's for your success in life, but won't it be pointless if you lose your life?」

「It's because I'm a person who only has many faults and no value」

「—Hai?」

Dimitar's personality was certainly full of faults, but he possessed considerable ability as a soldier. Unable to understand why he'd belittle himself to this extent, Valeria knitted her eyebrows.

「That I can be in a such position—before that, that I can live until today is due to Lucius and Oba-sama's aid. Therefore, I must help you and accomplish the mission so that I won't cause them to lose face. ...It turned out like this because you acted arbitrarily」

「I, I'm sorry okay」

「You don't have to apologise...a Dominas is permitted to act on her own judgement, and it was also my role to hold your reins properly.」

It was my ineptitude that I couldn't control you」

「...When hearing you portray yourself as a bad person to that extent, it's like hearing that I'm being awfully childish and wilful instead」

「It's a fact that you're a brat」

Dimitar raised his lips and smiled.

「...Anyway, seeing that it has come to this, my job is to send you back to the capital. Even if I die here...maa, it might be glorious death as a Hiera Glaphicos, and Lucius and Oba-sama's reputation will rise」

「Like I said—」

「You don't need to mind it. ...Assuming that I died, it won't be for your sake, but for Lucius and Oba-sama's sake」

「You...! If you've the leisure to talk back like that, then walk even more steadily!」

「That's why I said so right? To leave me behind and—」

「If that's the case!」

Valeria spoke and drowned out Dimitar's mutter that seemed to vanish anytime.

「It's not for your sake that I didn't abandon you, but for Lucius-sama's sake! If I let you die because of me...ho, hora, Lucius's impression of me will become bad!」

「I see...that's just like you」

「Right? After all, I don't really care if you die or live! But for the future of Lucius-sama and I, I'm trying to help you because it can't be helped! —If you understand, then walk quickly!」

「...Since Lucius is Oba-sama's only son, he can't become the Costacurta House's son-in-law no matter how hard you try you know?」

「Ko...y, you, saying unpleasant things...!」

「I'm just teaching you the reality. —Leaving that aside, talk a bit more quietly」

「You've a lot of complaints...!」

「That doesn't matter but we're being caught up」

「Ehh?」

Dimitar thrust Valeria away lightly and pulled out the sword on his waist in a flash. The spear which had made a jarring sound of "kain!" and turned into two equal parts fell at the boy's feet.

As if that was the signal, the soldiers of the rebel army rushed out from within the darkness.

Dimitar stood to protect Valeria's back and cut down the arrows that flew here.

「It can't be helped...cover me」

「Y, you plan to fight?」

「There's no choice but to get rid of all the pursuers here right? Or will you leave me behind and escape ahead now?」

「Mou...! Don't instruct me on everything! My position is higher!」

Valeria took a longer time than usual, produced a large flame and hurled it towards the soldiers.

「Uwa—」

Maybe the soldiers were cautious of Dimitar, they had surrounded

him at a distance and were about to shoot arrows. Due to the flame scorching and burning off the bowstrings, the bows split open in the soldiers' hands one after another.

Catching the enemies off guard, Dimitar rushed in at one go and flashed his sword. Several soldiers raised spurts of blood and collapsed; unrest spread out among the remaining soldiers.

「...Run」

Leaning on the sword that was thrust into the ground, Dimitar looked back at Valeria as he heaved his shoulders greatly.

「...If there're no projectile weapons, it might be possible somehow. Escape quickly」

「You didn't hear what people are saying at all!」

Valeria ran up to Dimitar's side and waved her right hand with a big action.

「...Didn't I just said that I won't leave you behind!? I've been telling you repeatedly that this's for Lucius-sama's sake!」

As if chasing Valeria's hand that flowed like it was stroking the empty space, a vivid flame spouted out in the dark and caused the soldiers to flinch.

Thereupon, countless arrows flew here from somewhere.

「Gaa!」

「T, they've other comrades!?」

The soldiers immediately became restless at the surprise attack from an unexpected direction.

「...They've more or less made it in time huh」

「Ehh?」

「Iya—」

Dimitar raised the sword overhead languidly, supported the blade with his left hand and shook its tip. A bluish black line extended from the boy's arm that was gripping the hilt, passed through his fist and ran to apex of the sword.

「Can you let me have a rest soon—?」

An enormous lump of flame flew from the edge of the sword which was swung at the same time as he spat out.

「—!」

Let alone evading, the confused soldiers, who didn't even noticed that Dimitar had spent time and prepared magic, received it directly and were blown off.

While the flame's redness hadn't subsided, Dimitar kept the sword into its scabbard and said to Valeria.

「...We're moving at once」

「B, but—」

「They probably won't give chase anymore. If they do, it'll be after they had returned temporarily and gathered a number of them」

「T, that's not it. The arrows from a while ago—」

「Don't worry about it」

「I will!」

「That may be so for you, but I don't care about it」

Trying to drag his body, Dimitar turned around.

「—Dimitar-sama」

It wasn't even three minutes when Valeria had lent her shoulder to Dimitar again and began to walk, that a slender figure suddenly appeared from the thicket before them.

「Don't panic」

Dimitar restrained Valeria who had tried to direct her right hand towards that person and smiled.

「...It's not just you right?」

「Hai. Bocchama is also here. —I was against it though」

A woman who was wearing lightweight leather armour stepped forward in front of the pair. The colouring (カラーリング) of black hair with light brown skin was relatively rare in Amaddo. She was an individual beautiful woman who concealed the sparkle of a strong will in her eyes that tended to be moist. Seeing that she was carrying a small bow and quiver on her back, this woman was probably the one who took the enemies by surprise and shot the arrows moments ago.

Valeria looked at Dimitar and the beautiful woman alternately, and tilted her head to the side.

「...Who's she?」

「She's a maid of Lucius's house」

「I'm Thial Krkic, Valeria-sama」

Like the maids in Valeria's mansion, the girl—Thial displayed a gesture of holding her skirt and bowing courteously. That pose was certainly typical of a maid, but she had never seen a maid with such a militaristic style. At the very least, the Costacurta House's maids shouldn't have touch a bow and arrow or sword.

「—In any case, please come this way. Bocchama is waiting over there together with Bettina-jou」

「Bocchama...did Lucius-sama come?」

Valeria unintentionally looked up at Dimitar's face, but the boy turned away and didn't say anything.

◆◆◆

Lucius extracted the pierced arrowhead and held his hand over the wound where fresh blood flowed out again. A faint soft light dwelt in Lucius's right hand that had removed its glove and gently healed the pain of Dimitar's wound.

「It's good that it ended with this degree」

「Who knows」

Dimitar averted his gaze from Lucius who had glanced at his expression with upturned eyes and closed his eyes. Unlike Dimitar who could only use magic that was solely for fighting, Lucius could use various magic. He might have inherited his mother's talent as it was.

Lucius then asked Dimitar who had taken a large and deep breath altogether while the pain receded.

「—Well then, the magic that erases magic crests, what kind of thing is it?」

「I didn't see it personally. Please ask Her Eminence about that」

「You...do you also use that tone towards Valeria-jou?」

「Why?」

「It sounds as if you're making fun of her you know? Aren't you repeating "Her Eminence Her Eminence"?」

「I think "Her Eminence" is an honorific, but does it sounds like I'm making fun of her when I use it?」

「Even though you're actually using it with the intention of making fun of her」

Lucius lowered his voice and smiled.

「—Truth be told, I also thought that you and Valeria-jou seem incompatible. You dislike strong-willed girls like her after all」

「Then why was I chosen to be her exclusive Hiera Glaphicos? Even Oba-sama ought to know that right?」

「I don't understand Haha-ue's thoughts either. Unexpectedly, she might just enjoy seeing you and Valeria-jou in a fluster (*due to being paired up*)」

「...This isn't a laughing matter」

「Haha...maa treat that as a joke」

Lucius withdrew his small smile and changed his expression.

「—If it's a Hiera Glaphicos, anyone should be able to erase magic crests?」

「Yeah」

In the case where a magic warrior who had committed a crime was arrested, his magic crests would generally be erased; since in a state where magic could be used, easily breaking out of prison was possible even if he was thrown into it.

「...But it's impossible to erase them in an instant」

While borrowing Lucius's assistance and coiling his upper body in bandages, Dimitar muttered.

「It usually takes the same time as drawing magic crests or more. To be able to erase them in an instant means that it's clearly a "magic" that we've yet to know. How about you?」

「I also don't know. —In any case, although I received the notice from you and rushed over, I'm glad to have arrived」

「It might be bittersweet for Her Eminence」

「Is that so?」

「Yeah」

「So you've understood Valeria-jou well in this short time?」

「It's easy to understand her. She reveals whatever she's thinking on her face too much. ...If you're with her for half a day, even you will immediately understand what that girl is thinking」

「I see」

Maybe something was amusing; when Lucius smiled with a “nico nico” and stood up, he patted on Dimitar's shoulder and went to the other side of the thicket.

Dimitar leaned against the tree trunk, grabbed and ate the high-grade cheese and bacon that Lucius had brought, and drank the wine.

From the eastern sky that had finally begun to dawn, dazzling light shone through the leaves and branches of every tree.



Valeria borrowed Thial's help, cleaned her body and put on her spare ceremonial clothes. She leaked out a sigh of relief while combing her long hair. As expected, she was unsettled as she was lightly dressed, but nevertheless, it was much better than to keep on wearing those wet clothes.

「...Even so, why's Lucius-sama here?」

「It's because he received a letter from Dimitar-sama」

「Huh? Di—Richternach-kyou's letter?」

Valeria stopped her hand that was moving the comb and looked at Thial who was snapping off thin branches and throwing them into the bonfire.

「That guy, he sent such a thing? When?」

「I didn't read the contents, ...but it somehow seemed to be sent from Cromatan town.」

「By now, Valeria-jou has realised that he's attentive to fairly small details despite how he looks right?」

「Ah—」

Valeria hurriedly put on the mantle at Lucius's voice that had flown here.

「Have you finished dressing up already?」

「Ha, hai, please come in!」

「Well then, excuse me」

After he was informed so, Lucius pushed his way through the thicket and came over.

「Um...Richternach-kyou is?」

「Dii is having a meal at the other side. There's no need to worry about his injuries」

Lucius sat down near the bonfire and smiled.

「—As a matter of fact, Dii sent a carrier pigeon to me from Cromatan」

「Don't tell me...that guy called for Lucius-sama with that letter!?」

「He didn't tell me to come in particular. He wrote and sent information of Seriba that he had gotten out from the pedlars in

Cromatan; the rest is maa...things about you and the like」

「Eh!?」

Hearing that Dimitar had written about her in the letter to Lucius, Valeria was shocked.

「W, what did that guy write about!?!」

「To be specific, he didn't write criticism on you. ...Maa, should I say it's a very objective impressions—or perhaps a report regarding your character?」

「W, why's there a need to report to Lucius-sama of such matters!?!」

「...Valeria-jou has already understood what kind of thing a Dominas's first job is right?」

「Is it about gaining experience and achievements in an easy mission?」

「Yes. —Dii wrote that whether you'd flare up when you learnt of such circumstances」

“Gikuri,” Valeria gulped.

「Considering your character, Dii predicted that far from being unable to feel satisfied with such an arranged mission, wouldn't you get angry instead? When that happens, he doesn't know if you'll go back to the capital meekly. If it turns out like that, he may have to return by knocking you out and dragging you along, but he never arrive at the conclusion whether it's alright to go that far or not. ...Dii seemed to be hesitant on that matter」

「.....」

Valeria hung her head in shame. Having reacted as per Dimitar's prediction, as if her shallowness was exposed, she was somehow ashamed.

「I also thought about it because I received such a letter」

Lucius who was in a plain black clothing that was different from the Seal Chivalric Order's (*Furigana: Templar Aegis*) uniform spoke with a bitter smile.

「—Just then, Valeria-jou's father came to my home and only spoke of how he couldn't help but to worry about you」

「M, my father came!? To Lucius-sama's mansion!?」

Valeria's cheeks became even redder and hotter. He had insisted that she declined to be a Dominas and had begged Lucius in tears; exactly how far would that father hinder his daughter before he was satisfied?

「It's his parental love of solely thinking about his daughter. I was deeply moved」

Maybe he saw through Valeria's mind, Lucius spoke so as to pacify the girl.

「Somehow, there doesn't seem to be the Seal Chivalric Order's turn in this matter, and it's also the first job of Dii who is like a younger brother, so I thought of going to see the situation a little...that maa, since things became like this result-wise, it might be good luck in various ways」

「In other words...it's unrelated to the Chivalric Order's mission that you're here...?」

「Yes. If this became known to mother and His Highness, they might get angry. In fact, I should be preparing for unforeseen situation and standing by in my home」

Looking at Lucius who had smiled and replied so, Valeria harboured mixed feelings. Although her father had interfered needlessly, she was happy that Lucius had worried about her and rushed here. But perhaps within Lucius, this was for Dimitar's sake

rather than for hers. Valeria somehow understood that.

「—I've given the horses water to drink!」

A pink coloured armour which was pulling four horses appeared. In contrast to Valeria who had undergone a bad experience, the girl who had met up with Lucius earlier than Valeria was energetic and in high spirits as ever.

「So when will we depart desuka~?」

「Depart?」

At Bettina's remark, Valeria tilted her neck to the side.

「—Are you going somewhere?」

「Eh? I mean, aren't we're returning now?」

“Gachiri,” Bettina’s gaze went around and looked at Lucius. Drawn in by that, Valeria also looked at Lucius and quizzically raised her eyebrows at the handsome young man’s countenance that seemed somewhat uncomfortable.

「Lucius-sama...?」

「It's a bit hard to say this but Valeria-jou, ...let's return to the capital as it is now」

「Eh—?」

「I fully understand your anger, but this isn't something that can be handled by a Dominas one way or another. This isn't because you're new, but that it has already become a scale where the army will be mobilised」

「Therefore, return obediently—is that what you ‘re saying?」

「Yes. Perhaps at this time, elite soldiers should be heading towards Seriba from Roma. We just have to leave it to them afterwards. Even

if you only bring back the information of the magic which erases magic crests that the rebel army's ringleader had used, your performance is praiseworthy enough. You did uncover a new threat to us.]

Valeria also understood what Lucius had said. She was told the same thing by Dimitar too.

But nevertheless, she still wasn't convinced.

It no longer had anything to do with what kind of work a Dominas's first job was. Returning to the capital like this would seem as if she had lost to that Hokon—that was to say, a Dominas's authority had yielded to a heathen god; it didn't sit well with her by all means.

「Valeria-jou? Is something the matter?」

Maybe he notice the expression of the quiet Valeria, Lucius asked her seemingly puzzled.

「Um...Lucius-sama. I still—」

A presumptuous voice interrupted the words of Valeria who was about to continue with “don't intend to return”.

「Lucius」

「Are you feeling alright already, Dii?」

「Yeah」

While licking his thumb, Dimitar, who had carried the leather bag of wine and turned up, sat down next to Lucius.

「...When do you think the army will arrive?」

「Despite his appearances, His Highness is a person who doesn't hesitate once he decided to do something. If we assume that the army had set off already, they'll arrive by tomorrow's night at the latest I

guess」

Lucius stared at the dazzling morning sun and answered.

「Is that so? In that case, we'll rest until sunset today and move after it gets dark」

「What do you mean, Dii? If we're going to return, then right now—」

「We can't return yet」

Dimitar donned black clothes on his upper body that was covered with bandages, jerked his chin and pointed to Valeria.

「...No matter how you look at it, Her Eminence isn't in agreement」

「Huh—」

Being directed the topic suddenly, Valeria faltered at once.

「—Besides, the tabard that was bestowed from His Majesty hasn't been recovered; the treasured sword too」

「That's...given these circumstances, it probably can't be helped. There're replacements」

「And that's how it is, but what'll you do?」

As if to say that she'd be the one to decide, Dimitar looked at Valeria.

「I, I—」

Valeria honestly didn't want to return yet. Leaving Hokon as he was would be admitting hers and Redountra's defeat. No matter how much words of praise she received from the Head Director and crown prince, she'd only feel empty as long as she held onto this thought.

But Valeria couldn't do anything alone. The most important thing

which Valeria learnt in this time's mission was that she wasn't as omnipotent as she had thought.

The assistance of Dimitar and the others was necessary in order to repay the favour back to Hokon. However, Valeria didn't know whether it was okay to prioritise her own feelings here again and force troubles onto them; after all, she and Dimitar were close to death because of that.

Lucius opened his mouth to fill up the silence that was born among them.

「...Valeria-jou, I've said this just now, but just by reporting the existence of the magic that erases magic crest, your performance this time is praiseworthy enough. Knowing or not knowing that matter beforehand will make a great difference in the damages that the approaching army will sustain—」

「That alone may be insufficient」

Dimitar interrupted Lucius's words again.

「It seems that Her Eminence wants an extraordinarily flashy debut. That degree of achievement is by no means enough I think. — Isn't that so?」

「I, indeed! That's right! That's so, Lucius-sama!」

After she had reflexively followed Dimitar's lead, Valeria clicked her tongue with an "oh no!" in her mind. With this, it was as if she had Dimitar supported her to persist in her own wilfulness. It irritated her to have created another debt again.

Lucius mixed in a sigh and shook his head.

「...This's troubling. Officially, I shouldn't be here...」

「No! I can't trouble Lucius-sama any further—」

「That's why I said that you're an idiot」

When Valeria panicky tried to decline Lucius's assistance, Dimitar's insult flew over. Although it wasn't the first time that she was mercilessly called an idiot, she got angry in regardless of how many times she heard it.

Dimitar gulped down the wine with a “goku goku” and pointed at Valeria.

「—Listen, use whatever you can use. What're you holding back for at this late hour? Is the current you in a position to put on airs?」

「B, but—」

「It's not like you're asking him to die. It's only to help out a little right? Lucius is a good person, so he definitely won't refuse」

「Oi, Dii. Don't say such things before the person himself」

「Will you refuse then?」

「I obviously can't refuse, can I? Going by the flow of this conversation, only people like you would calmly refuse Valeria-joy」

「And that's how it is. Rejoice, Your Eminence」

Dimitar looked at Valeria and showed a cynical-like smile.

「—The Lucius-sama whom everyone yearns for will unofficially lend us a hand」

「Good grief...」

Lucius who had smiled bitterly at the goodness of Dimitar's tone noticed Thial's gaze and cleared his throat slightly.

「...That's, how it is. I'm sorry but I'd like Thial to accompany us a bit more」

「I don't mind in particular, if that's what Bocchama wants to do」



Thial replied indifferently as if she was somewhat displeased. But for just an instant, in the fleeting glance that she had directed to Dimitar, was it animosity towards the sharp-tongued boy? There was something which clearly wasn't good will mixed in. That was probably something that came from jealousy. It might be because she was feeling jealous of Dimitar and Lucius's closeness again that she understood it.

「...So in the end, what does Valeria-jou wishes to do?」

「That's—I want to capture the rebel army's ringleader who calls himself General Hokon with my own hands—」

「Certainly, if you're able do that, this rebellion can be quelled without shedding blood needlessly—」

「That may be a way of doing it. —We just have to target Hokon only, since there's no need to take on the entire rebel army by ourselves」

「Don't tell me you...?」

Maybe he realised something, Lucius looked at Dimitar. As expected, there seemed to be a very good bond which was difficult for other people to cut in between these two people.

Chapter 06 - Let the Wind Blow at Dawn

In Amaddo that had the “**Hill of Seal**”, there was a Seal Chivalric Order that was formed to protect the seal.

Although the Amaddo’s crown prince, otherwise a young man of the royalty who possessed the succession right to the throne, served as the Seal Chivalric Order’s leader for generations, the commands of the group were substantially entrusted to the vice-leader. Each group member was a young person from a respectable family, and being selected as a member was supposedly a very honourable thing. But in reality, to be called a combat group was something that had become distant already.

On the other hand, the intensity of the group members’ elitism grew, and there were mentions of it becoming an exclusive group.



Its current leader was the sole son of the present king, Jeffren Francesc the 11th, **Crown Prince Jeffren Isaac**.

On the morning of that day, a spy on the mayor’s side, who had attempted to intrude into the new town areas, was brought to a perfectly displeased Hokon.

If this was a mere prisoner, Hokon wouldn’t need to go out of his way to interrogate him. Considering that Hokon had personally taken it upon himself to ask, then it was because this spy held important information.

「...Let me ask you one more time」

Hokon, who was ruminating while walking aimlessly inside the study, stopped his feet suddenly and looked at several letters that were placed on the desk.

「Will the reinforcement from the capital really arrive tomorrow night?」

「.....」

The prisoner, whose hands were tied behind his back, bit his lips and faced away as he knelt before Hokon. Even if the soldiers who were standing on both sides poked him with their toes, there was no sign of him opening his mouth.

Hokon picked up a letter and silently read it once more.

What the prisoner had, were secret messages addressed to the people who were participating in the rebel army. It was written that the Amaddo's reinforcement would likely arrive at Seriba tomorrow morning and speedily subjugate the rebel army, thus it wished for them to surrender and collude with them (*mayor's side*) before it was too late. Simply put, it was a letter which urged a surrender to split the rebel army from the inside.

“Kushari”, Hokon crushed it into a ball and questioned him further.

「To whom were you planning to send these to? And are there any other people whom you've sent identical letters to?」

「.....」

「I can also put you through torture at once though」

「.....」

「Oi, that's enough—」

The soldiers who had dragged the prisoner along vented their irritations before Hokon did.

But when Hokon reined them in, he clapped a little in front of his chest and,

「Investigate this prisoner's identity. There should be at least one or two relatives or close friends on our side」

「...!」

The prisoner who had faced away the whole time until then looked up at Hokon as if he was surprised.

「It can't be helped if he doesn't wish to talk. Let's have someone among his relatives shoulder his crime. It's truly—a sad thing」

「P...please wait! That sort of—」

「Hou...as I thought, such a close person exists?」

「U...!」

「You're keeping quiet again? Ma, very well. —Please search for his relatives and bring them to the courtyard. Have it done by noon」

「Understood」

「W, wait! Please wait!」

Hokon coldly looked down at the prisoner who had opened his mouth again and combed down his moustache.

「...Until I'm satisfied, if you carelessly keep your mouth shut again, then at that time, I'll really locate your relatives and crucify them. I truly...truly dislike wasting time you see」

「U, understood—」

The prisoner oozed cold sweat and hung his head.

「...Then let me ask you again. Is the story of the reinforcement true?」

「A, an unfamiliar girl came to the town hall at dawn and said that reinforcement from Roma is heading here—」

「Who's that girl?」

「I, I don't know. ...But the mayor was very humble, so she might have been a messenger who is a distinguished person of central or something...」

「Fumu. —And?」

「And...after I talked with the mayor for a while」

「He gave you this special mission?」

「T, that's right...he said to deliver this letter to Montreuil-san somehow—there seemed to be four, five soldiers who were given similar mission, but I don't know where they went...」

「Montreuil...?」

「I'm certain that he's a distant relative of the mayor」

The soldier who was on standby beside Hokon softly whispered into his ear.

「He didn't get along with the mayor very well since the past. He's a wealthy person and has been providing us funds in exchange for his personal safety」

「A narrow-minded person who has neither thoughts nor ideals... that sort of man will turn traitor again immediately if it becomes inconvenient, which is often the case」

「What'll you do?」

「I'll have to think this through」

It was easy to capture and get rid of the town's influential people who had the possibility of betraying him without the need to argue.

After all was said and done, the one who held real power was Hokon.

But setting aside when the rebellion succeeded completely, at the current stage where the mayor's side had yet to surrender, to judge the influential people who had offered him their collaboration would incite the antipathy of the masses on his side. In addition, if the rumour of the reinforcement coming from the capital were to spread, Hokon's situation would deteriorate in one breath.

「I might ask him something else again. —Throw him into the underground storehouse. Don't let him escape this time, understand?」

「Haa」

After the prisoner was marched off, Hokon asked the soldier who was his close aide.

「...There's still no contact from our country?」

「Ha...it seems that the condition of His Majesty's health isn't satisfactory—」

「What a ridiculous rumour!」

Hokon rejected his close aide's words and clenched his fists.

「—If I raise an army here, His Majesty will definitely respond to it! For the sake of crossing that mountain range and mowing down those fellows who boast of being gifted with God's wisdom, our troops which had received the blessing of Marido will come! Until then, I'll never give up!」

「B, but—in that case, what'll you do?」

「We'll pulverise the opposition force which is barricading themselves in the town hall before Amaddo's reinforcement arrives. We'll take the town hall, and capture the mayor and the stationing troops' commanding officer. Afterwards, we'll blockade all the gates, fortify our defence and attack the enemy's reinforcement」

「T, that's, in other words, we'll hold the town? Even though we may not know when the reinforcement from our country will arrive —」

「They'll come! Without fail!」

「B, but...」

「More than that, what happened to the escaped Dominas and her Hiera Glaphicos? Are they not caught yet?」

「...In the early dawn, several soldiers had discovered them in the town's western forest, but hindrance came in...」

「Did they fail to catch them?」

「I, I'm sorry. ...However, it may be impossible to escape as the Hiera Glaphicos had sustained fairly severe wounds. Perhaps it was the soldiers on the mayor's side who had obstructed them」

「Then the town hall is sheltering the Dominas?」

「There's no positive proof but—」

「...That's fine」

At any rate, the top priority attack target of Hokon didn't change. Whether the information about the reinforcement from the capital arriving tomorrow night was true or not, the conclusion would be settled for now if the town hall fall by today.

「There may be similar letters that had reached the others. Send soldiers to the important wealthy merchants and influential people immediately, and enquire them of the authenticity. ...Even if they follow us now, there's no certainty that people who will become restless and betray again won't appear once they learn that reinforcement is coming soon」

「Understood」

Hokon ordered the soldier and sat down on the sofa. When he was alone like this, he'd let out a sigh as expected.

Although he lost the power struggle within the army and was ousted from the country, Hokon had run through many battlefields until now. He was proud of both his mind and body not wasting away despite being past 40 now and also had a strong spirit of presenting this town that would become a bridgehead to invading Amaddo and returning triumphantly to Bigerou.

However—Hokon was aware that this was his weakness though—it was unfortunate that Hokon had few subordinates whom he could trust.

This Seriba which was located at the southern end of Amaddo had interactions with Bigerou at a civilian level since a long time ago. There were many southern people and mixed bloods with southern ancestry who had migrated from the other side of the mountain range living here. If the feelings of alienation and discontent which were potentially held by such people were stirred up in a skilful manner, it was easy to cause a rebellion.

Although the rebel army was built up like that, the ones whom Hokon could actually rely on were only his ex-subordinates who were simultaneously expelled from the country and had wandered together with him here, and they numbered less than 30. The citizens who sided with them due to dissatisfaction towards the central government could still be said to be better, but there were also many citizens who couldn't help but to side with them because of the surrounding circumstances; such people would probably defect to the mayor's side readily if Hokon's situation worsened.

Due to such significance, Hokon didn't trust his entire army. His deep sigh might have stemmed from that anxiety.

「...The story of the reinforcement is true」

「Medou, is it?」

Hokon laughed while sitting on the sofa. The woman who was completely dressed in black would aim at the time when Hokon became alone and called out to him abruptly. But when this was repeated so much, he had an inkling of that timing somehow.

Hokon then spoke without looking back at Medou.

「Do you've comrades in Roma? Where did you obtain such information from?」

「My comrades are all over the world. ...And you seemed to have let the Dominas and her Hiera Glaphicos escape, no?」

「I didn't let them escape. I've cornered them to the town hall」

「Did you allow your subordinates to use such sophistry since the past? If so, then it's only to be expected that you lost your standing」

「I'm already used to your wicked tongue. —So, what do you need? It's rare for you to appear during the day」

「I only wish to give a farewell before I leave here」

「...What?」

Hokon looked at Medou suspiciously.

「Do you not understand unless I say it clearly? —I've given up on you. The rebellion will be subjugated tomorrow」

「You haven't even seen it with your eyes until the end—」

Clicking his tongue, Hokon stood up.

But when he looked back again, the figure of Medou wasn't anywhere already.

「...?」

Hokon simply stood still alone in the study where sunlight was

shining upon it.

Now that he thought of it, Medou didn't show up in front of others besides Hokon, and Hokon himself also didn't even inform his trusted subordinates about Medou.

It suddenly seemed as if the existence of the woman called Medou was an illusion or something, and Hokon stared at his hands.

Now, only this gauntlet which Medou had given him indicated her existence.



The Commanding Officer Mazzali of the stationing troops looked down on the town's map that was spread over the table and groaned with a bitter expression.

「...Certainly, as long as the reinforcement from the capital arrives, it may be easy to subjugate Hokon's rebel army. But if this town hall were to fall before that, it'll become difficult. Therefore, the question is whether we can resist the enemy's attack until the reinforcement's arrival or not...」

「Please do hold out」

Aloof to Mazzali's distressed expression, the girl before him announced indifferently and simply.

「In any case, the reinforcement won't arrive early. Hence, I humbly request that the stationing troops as well as the commanding officer rouse themselves here」

「Humbly request, you say...」

「We wouldn't have hardships if we can really rouse ourselves with such words, you...」

The plump mayor who was resting his chin in his hands on the

table threw a glance to the woman who named herself as the Dominas's attendant. But if Mazzali were to say his true feelings, then he wanted to glare at the mayor. After all, this middle-aged man with the principle of peace at any price concealed the fact that a Dominas had come to this town the whole time. Although he thought "I see" when he heard of the part where it was a top secret mission, nevertheless, there was probably no need to make it a secret even to him who was the person in charge in the military aspect.

When Mazzali cleared his throat deliberately, he approached the window.

「Needless to say, we intend to devote all of our power for the sake of the motherland. ...But will the reinforcement really come?」

「They'll come」

Each and every remark of this woman named Thial was short, and on top of that, she was unsociable. Maybe something was boring as she was making a seemingly displeased face the entire time. Moreover, perhaps she had a little of the southern people's blood mixed in, she had black hair on a light brown skin and black eyes. If Mazzali had met her alone, he'd never believe that she was a Dominas's attendant. Mazzali secretly beckoned to the mayor.

「Mayor」

「W, what's it, Commanding Officer?」

「...Can we really trust this woman? In fact, the possibility that she's a spy on Hokon's side—」

「But this child has the decree, and she also knew about the contents of last night's conversation which are known only to Dominas-sama, Hiera Glaphicos-dono and me, you know? If so, she isn't a spy right?」

「.....」

「In the first place, isn't it too late to say such things now? We've already dispatched spies as per what that child had said—」

「You know...wasn't that something you did without my permission? Why didn't you discuss a word about that with me? To make matters worse, you made the civilians as spies and sent them to that side—」

Mazzali desperately held down his anger towards the mayor who had said things as if he was an outsider and shook his voice slightly.

「B, but, that was Hiera Glaphicos-dono's instruction—」

「Attendant-dono」

Mazzali turned his gaze away from the mayor and approached Thial.

「—Where're Dominas-sama and Hiera Glaphicos-dono? I'd like to meet them directly and hear about the story. Besides, there's the issue of security...if we don't assign guards」

「Guards aren't necessary」

Thial curtly declared so.

「Besides, Dominas-sama is currently in the middle of the top secret mission so she can't come here」

「B, but—in that case, if there's danger to the pair...!」

「You don't have to worry about that. I can't say the details, but "reinforcement" has already arrived at that side」

Thial pulled the chair without making a sound, stood up and bowed respectfully.

「...I sincerely hope that you'll keep the matter of Dominas-sama coming here a secret...」

When Thial left behind such words and departed, Mazzali immediately called his subordinate.

「—Oi, secretly follow that woman from just now」

「Hey, hey~y! W, wait just a moment, you all!」

The mayor panicky detained Mazzali and the subordinate.

「W, what're you planning, Commanding Officer—do you still suspect that child?」

「I'm sorry, but I can't be optimistic like the mayor」

「You—」

「C, commanding Officer!」

As the commanding officer and the mayor were arguing, another soldier rushed into the office.

「What's it? What happened?」

「I, it's the report from the scout! T, the movement of the rebel army's soldiers is becoming hurried!」

「What?」

「C, Commanding Officer! Those guys aren't planning to begin an all-out attack at last, are they—」

「...Or rather, weren't the spies whom you sent in caught immediately?」

「Eh? W, what do you mean?」

「Good grief...」

Slightly fed up with the slow-witted mayor, Mazzali looked down at the map.

From the start, Hokon must have anticipated that Amaddo's reinforcement would turn up shortly in Seriba that was at a politically delicate location.

But if the reinforcement arrived quicker than expected, Hokon's rebellion which was unable to gain total control of Seriba would end in failure. Hokon was probably well aware that the weakness of his plan lay there.

Mazzali scratched his head with a "bori bori" and put on his hat.

「...I think the spies who were sent to the other side were caught and the information that reinforcement will arrive was leaked to the other party. Due to that, Hokon became impatient and began preparation for an all-out attack」

「W, what did you say~y!?」

「If he suppresses this town completely, even if the reinforcement comes, he can shut the ramparts and hold the town for half a month or so. In the meantime, the situation will reverse again if reinforcement from Bigerou comes」

「W-w, what should we do, Commanding Officer!?!」

「There's one thing that we've to do. ...That girl from just now also said it right?」

「What did she say again?」

「To hold out, until reinforcement arrives」

If it was tomorrow night and the reinforcement arrived, and if they could carry out a clear indicator of shifting to a counterattack, the morale of the soldiers, who hitherto were exhausted from defending against attacks that occurred be it day or night and pressured by the numerical inferiority, would rise.

「—Convey this matter to the ordinary citizens too, and recruit

volunteer soldiers. After that, you don't have to think about what comes next. Bring out all the food and wine, and treat them to everyone. ...If we hold out until tomorrow midnight, we can win!」

「Understood!」

Mazzali issued instructions to his subordinates and lined up coins on the map. Where and how much military force should he deploy—he must organised the preparations for interception before the enemy's all-out attack began.

「Err—...Commanding Officer? What should I do?」

「For the time being, please show your face occasionally at that balcony, and lavish compliments on the soldiers and civilians who are working there」

「I, is it fine with just that?」

「It's a job that only you can do」

Mazzali answered without looking back at the mayor.

Even if it was a rumour or a joke, if talks that the mayor had escaped from the town hall and the like spread, people would judge that there was no chance of winning and lose their will to resist. It was easy to prevent that by having the person himself diligently appeared in front of the people.

「...I'm sorry, but even if the reinforcement doesn't makes it in time and this place falls, I must have you remain in the town until the end together with me」

Glancing at the mayor, who was waving his hand with a triumphant look on the balcony that overlooked the town hall's courtyard, over his shoulder, Mazzali warped his lips inside his mind.



Perhaps a conflict had started somewhere already, violent shouts roared from a distance.

Valeria, who was leaning against a tree trunk with her right leg stretched straightly, squinted at the setting sun that shone through the foliage and asked suddenly.

「...Nee」

「What?」

「Isn't your strategy a little rough?」

「...What're you saying at this time?」

Dimitar, who was restoring the magic crests (*Furigana: Hierateka*) of Valeria's right knee, took a deep breath greatly and raised his face. Was it the effect of having slept from dawn until around noon? His complexion seemed to have improved considerably.

Valeria grimaced at the pain that was similar to her knee being scraped off with a "chiri chiri" and continued.

「Because...in the end, you informed both sides that reinforcement is coming, right?」

「I informed the mayor's side only」

「But that information was leaked to Hokon immediately, wasn't it?」

「I've foreseen that and given instructions on this and that; otherwise, I'll be troubled」

「However, the battle started because of that, you know?」

「What're you saying now? Battles take place repeatedly every day」

「But—」

「Be it *but* or *however*, you've a lot of contradictory conjunctions」

Dimitar stopped his hand that was drawing magic crest and held it over Valeria's knee. He was alleviating the pain that arose when drawing magic crests.

Dimitar, who had recovered after a brief rest, ate hurriedly and went back to restoring Valeria's magic crests like this. The restoration of her left hand's magic crests had already finished and as long as her right knee was over and done with afterwards, the inconvenience of using one type of magic would disappear. Naturally, there was a need to return to the capital and get them restored to their complete forms, but this was sufficient as a stopgap measure on the battlefield.

「.....」

Lucius took Thial, who had played an active part in this and that, and went to scout out the battle formation on Hokon's side. Bettina who had waited continuously for Valeria to come back without a wink of sleep last night was sleeping close by while wearing her armour.

Therefore, although it wasn't the case, the air was somehow heavy. It might be only Valeria who felt that the air was heavy, but at any rate, she couldn't help but feel uncomfortable to be face-to-face with Dimitar like this.

Valeria cleared her throat slightly and asked.

「...So, what should we do after this?」

「We'll beat Hokon up」

「Iya, that's why I'm asking about the specific method—」

「Grab the nape of his neck and pummel your fists into his face. I'll stab him for the finishing blow」

「My meaning of specific is different! I'm asking about the method

to reach Hokon!」

「...You still don't understand?」

Dimitar glanced at Valeria's face fleetingly. There, a smile, which she had often seen until now and as though making fun of people, appeared. Although it was as irritating as ever, she could feel that the boy's imprudence was mysteriously and conversely reliable.

「If Hokon knows that reinforcement is coming very soon, he'll probably become desperate to take the town hall by today, since he has no chance of winning no matter what he does after the reinforcement comes」

「So why're you kindly informing him this? The matter of informing mayor-san is still understandable but—」

「If the rebel army sets out for an all-out attack to hasten the conclusion, their military force will naturally concentrate on the front line. The vicinity of the old rampart which divides the new and old town areas will become the first battleground. The rebel army will attack the old town areas with this as a reference point, and the the stationing troops will try to force them back somehow」

「If it turns out as such...what'll happen?」

「...Their military force will gather there, you know? It becomes clear if you think about it」

「Ah—」

“I see!” Valeria clapped her hands.

「And when I had thought that the pursuing soldiers haven't come into the forest since then, were all of them perhaps sent around to the front line? This means that they don't have military force to spare here? Is that it?」

「That's not exactly wrong」

Dimitar brushed his neck and smiled bitterly.

「...The army, which maintains its bulk at the front line and becomes reliant on the front, will become short-handed in the rear; especially in the case of wishing for a short decisive battle. Therefore, Hokon will likely invest his main military force mostly in the front line」

「Ah...that means that the soldiers will be gone from Hokon's surroundings?」

「They may not be completely gone, but the opportunities which we can take advantage of are sure to increase. ...We shall attack there」

「—Nee」

「What's it this time?」

「Why did you change your perspective suddenly?」

「.....」

Dimitar who was drawing magic crests from her kneecap to her shin raised his face quizzically.

「Even though you said nothing but “go back, go back” to me until midway」

「The one who didn't listen to what people said was you right? And are you dissatisfied that I sided with the obstinate you?」

「It's because Lucius-sama objected」

「Given his position, he'd have done so. There's the matter of Obasama too, and even he had barely violated the military laws and rushed here. If you make a blunder here and really lose your life this time, the Richternach House will disappear from the world」

「Hold on...it's like you're saying that it's someone else's fault somehow!」

「It's a fact that the underlying cause was that you disregarded my opinion at the start」

「Mu...!」

When he brought that up, Valeria had no words to respond.

「...Ma, either way, it might be because Lucius had judged that there's a chance of success in this plan that he gave in」

「Is that so? Somehow, it seems that Lucius-sama is very soft on you」

「.....」

Dimitar raised his face again and stared at Valeria fixedly.

「W, what? Did I said such a strange thing?」

「Iya...in short, I guess that's the reason why you are displeased with me. You're the same as Thial. It seems that she isn't pleased with Lucius spoiling me too」

「You think that was the only reason why I dislike you? You're so simple」

「I intend to look at reality more than you do. —How's this?」

Dimitar sighed and hit the girl's kneecap lightly.

Valeria put on her boots, got up and gathered her consciousness in her right leg. Red glowing phosphorescence ran from her thigh, through her knee and to her ankle. There were still many lines that had disappeared, but if she had this much magic crests, she might be able to use magic without difficulty.

「—I guess it's troubling that you don't have your tabard」

「Eh?」

「Your tabard」

Being told so again, Valeria, as if she had remembered her appearance now, hurriedly hid her breasts and the area around her navel with her hands.

「W, where's the mantle!? Hey!」

「It seems that the dirty mantle has surprisingly become your favourite」

「It can't be helped right!」

「Fun」

Dimitar threw the mantle over to Valeria and walked towards Bettina.

「—Though you're new, if a Dominas is robbed of her tabard and treasured sword by the barbaric believers, and ran home shamelessly, this long-awaited achievement will lose its value. For the sake of raising my evaluation as well, I'll have you succeed in life」

「Is that all for Lucius-sama too?」

「—」

Without saying anything, Dimitar casually kicked Bettina's bottom.

「Oi, Gacha Pink」

「Hiwaa!?」

Bettina who was fast asleep jumped up to her feet at the shock that was transmitted from her tailbone.

「Nanana, na!?」

「Don't be half asleep. The day is getting dark soon. We're starting to move」

As though matching those words, Lucius and Thial came back.

「Are you ready, Dii?」

「Yeah, we're almost done. Any further restoration can only be entrusted to the main institution's specialist. ...So, what about those guys?」

「It's as expected at the present. The rebel army has mustered a considerable war potential at the front line」

「That's good」

「This's not necessarily good. If the stationing troops can't hold this onslaught at bay, the town hall will fall before you defeat Hokon. Even victims will appear greatly, you know?」

「Her Eminence will defeat Hokon before that」

「Her Eminence, is it...」

Lucius combed his long beautiful silver hair upwards and smiled wryly. Such black and plain clothes which shunned public gaze were unsuitable for the gorgeous Lucius. When she thought that Lucius had purposely put on such guise with Dimitar in mind, her begrudging envy towards Dimitar reboiled with a “futsu futsu” again.

「—Is this fine, Valeria-jou? You really won't regret it?」

「Yes」

However, Valeria smiled sweetly.

「If I think that everything will be for Lucius-sama at the end, I can endure any amount」

「Ha?」

「No no, I'm speaking to myself. —Well then, let's go, Richternach-kyou」

Valeria quietly pulled up her bustier beneath the mantle and began to walk.



Valeria and party waited for sunset and climbed the rampart. In the passageway where soldiers should be in swarms last night, there wasn't a single person now. It seems to be true that the military force was invested into the front line as much as possible.

「...They haven't forgotten that we exist, have they?」

Despite it being a convenient development for them, Valeria somehow felt like the existence of herself who was a Dominas was ignored and wasn't amused.

「They probably thought that Valeria-jou had taken refuge in the town hall」

「Either way, they wouldn't have expect us to come jumping in」

The Dominas whose magic crests were erased and the Hiera Glaphicos who had sustained severe wounds—for this pair who should have barely escaped alive to come back shortly again, Hokon certainly might not have anticipated that.

「We're going」

「Just a minute, don't take command so proudly! It should be me right!? Setting aside if I back down and concede this point to Lucius-sama—」

「You're extremely fussy」

Dimitar clicked his tongue with a sigh mixed in and jumped down from the rampart without hearing Valeria's fault-finding to the end. Although he got in the last word each time, seeing him like this, it looked like his injuries had become fairly better.

「Let's go, Valeria-jou」

「Hai♪」

Valeria directed a smile which had suddenly changed just now to Lucius, to the extent where even she felt that she was self-interested, and ran after Dimitar. Her right leg's magic crests which were just restored a while ago created a wind, killed the acceleration skilfully and let the girl's body land softly.

As it was the place where she had escaped from once, she already knew Hokon's whereabouts. It might take the time to say "ah!" if she used magic and ran swiftly.

「—Thial, Bettina-jou, I'll leave that place to you」

「Acknowledged」

「I, I'm going off!」

Thial who had bowed slightly and Bettina who had bowed respectfully with a "gachin" got off the dim road and ran away. The strategy—essentially, it was thought up by Dimitar alone—was that Valeria would break into Hokon's headquarters while Thial and Bettina became decoys and attract the enemies's attention.

「—Valeria-jou. If we break in, please allow me to take separate action」

Lucius said while running on top of the private houses.

「Although it's almost certain that Bigerou has nothing to do with this time's rebellion, perhaps there may be evidence that indicates the existence of a Bigerou's spy」

「Understood. It's regrettable that we can't go together, but—」

「It's all right, you've Dimitar」

「.....」

Was it because his name came out? Dimitar looked at Lucius silently.

「Take care of Valeria-jou properly all right, Dii? You promised, you know?」

「I know」

Dimitar replied curtly, took an especially large step and leaped in one breath. Jumping over many private houses and clearing even the high wall, he landed in the back yard of Earl Boske's villa that had become the rebel army's headquarters.

Valeria followed him and flew into the empty sky. If it was the usual, she wouldn't use magic so cheaply, but she didn't want to be carried and transported by Dimitar in Lucius's presence.

「...To have that degree of difficulty escaping is ridiculous」

Dimitar who had hidden himself in a thicket muttered while arranging his breathing quietly.

「Don't say such things, Dii」

Lucius who had landed softly after Valeria chided Dimitar.

At that moment, a pillar of fire rose in the south.

「...It has begun」

「Lucius-sama, that...what's it that's burning?」

「It's the windmill spire which is beside the south gate for drawing well water. If Hokon intends to choose the plan of holding the town after suppressing it, it'll be a severe blow to him for that to burn down」

「If he realises that it's burning, he surely won't leave it alone」

As though supporting the pair's words, the premises became noisy

at once. When they held their breaths inside the thicket, many soldiers rushed out and ran in the direction of the back gate.

Lucius undid the clasp of the sword on his waist and said to Valeria.

「If you successfully capture or kill Hokon, convey it to the soldiers on both sides immediately and put an end to the battle. ...That's your role, Valeria-jou」

「Understood」

「Well then, Dii, I'll be going」

「Yeah. We'll manage this side, so you do well too」

「That's my line」

Lucius brushed Dimitar's hair with a "kushari", stood up and began to run. It was possible that movement might be faster than Dimitar. As one would expect, the title of the Seal Chivalric Order's (*Furigana: Templar Aegis*) vice-leader wasn't just for show.

「...We're moving too」

「Ah , un」

Valeria kept close to Dimitar and came out of the thicket. Dimitar had already drawn out his sword.

「Richternach-kyou」

Valeria changed her tone a little and pointed at the villa's third floor.

「—I think that people with important positions would generally sleep in the highest place that can command a view of other people, but how about you?」

「Is there a commander who would sleep in the midst of an all-out attack? —But maa, I agree with the idea of attacking from above.

Lucius seemed to have gone from below.]

「Then—」

「You're slow.]

Dimitar carried Valeria, who was about to use magic and jump again, under his arm and started running. After an approach run of merely five, six steps, he jumped greatly.

「Just a min—」

「Reserve your magic for knocking down Hokon. It looks like this'll become a showy exchange of shots.]

「...U, un.]

When Dimitar who had descended at the third floor's balcony in one go released Valeria with movement that had no hesitation, he wedged the edge of the knife which he had pulled out from his boot into the window's crevice, loosened its clasp from the inside and unlocked it.

「...You really don't do this sort of things as your occupation, do you?】

「Can't you be quiet and watch people do their things?】

Dimitar returned her question with a question and crept into the room through the window that had been quickly opened. It seemed to be someone's bedroom, but there was no sign of life.

Dimitar rushed over in a trot to the door connecting to the corridor and turned its knob quietly.

「.....】

Just when he opened the door slightly, sounds which were similar to several men running around noisily were heard from below.

「No way—was Lucius-sama discovered!?」

「I think he let himself be discovered on purpose」

Dimitar went out to the corridor and observed the left and right.

「...Which way do you think it is?」

「Left」

「What's the basis?」

「When we were going up to the balcony just now, I saw that only a room at the eastern end was illuminated」

「...You seem to have learnt to put your wit to work a little」

「You're totally rude!」

Valeria waved her mantle and began to walk down the corridor. So as not to be discovered by the enemies or the like, without thinking of such things, she headed for the room at the eastern end with a “noshi noshi”. Now that she had come this far, she planned to face the enemy’s ringleader openly instead of moving sneakily.

On the verge of doing that,

「! There’re intruders!」

As soon as she approached the place that was a well as far as the first floor, voices came from below. When she unintentionally looked, there were several soldiers at the hall below, and they were looking up this way and shouting.

「The intruder here is a decoy! Protect the General!」

「Don’t let them escape!」

「W...」

Valeria drew back her neck and looked back at Dimitar.

「W, what shall we do!?」

「...Weren't you calm because you had some plans?」

「I, isn't that obvious! So that my feelings don't lose, I've thought that much and—」

「I don't think you've to put on airs but...for now, it's evident that Hokon is ahead」

Dimitar who had glanced at the door beyond the corridor swung his sword and shouted.

「Destroy the stairs here! We can buy time with that!」

「U, un!」

Valeria raised both hands as she was told. Her right hand's magic crests created a scorching flame, and her left hand's magic crests produced a violent whirlwind. Mixing those two together, the bright red flame turned into a maelstrom and surged forth.

「Uoah!」

「Hot」

The flame that had spread onto the staircase connecting from the hall on the first floor was fanned by the wind and increased its force. It rose like a wall at once and obstructed the soldiers' path.

「—Hurry up!」

Dimitar who had easily destroyed another staircase urged Valeria and began to run.

「E, even though I told you not to take command!」

Valeria, who had promptly ran right after Dimitar and tumbled into

the room through the door that Dimitar had kicked open, quickly ran her eyes over and searched for Hokon's figure.

「You're...!」

It seemed like that place was the study of this mansion. There were bookshelves which were fully stored with books lined up against the wall, and there were a comfortable-looking sofa and study desk placed by the window.

And then, the man who had spread a map on that desk stared at Valeria with a look of surprise.

「Hokon, prepare yourself!」

After flowing-like movements that resembled a dance, she strongly stamped her left foot. Thereupon, a gale which gave the impression of a kamaitachi welled up from her toes, tore up the carpet and approached Hokon.

「I never expect you to come back here—!」

Hokon's look of surprise soon changed into a fearless smile. Just before Valeria's “Tornado (*Furigana: Razor*)” turned the desk right into halves, Hokon jumped to the side to avoid it and stuck out his right hand.

「...Oi」

Hokon's fingertip which was facing Valeria's chest accurately deviated sideways due to a book that had flown from the side.

「Tsuu...!」

「You'll experience pain if you ignore me, you know」

Dimitar, who had thrown the book instantly and caused Hokon's aim to go astray, kicked down a chair and plunged in.

「Are you the Hiera Glaphicos—」

Hokon's eyes alternated between Valeria and Dimitar. He might be hesitant about who he ought to defeat first. That was, whether Dimitar shortened his distance with Hokon or Valeria prepared her next magic, too much of an opening.

「Lower your head, Richternach-kyou!」

「—Got it」

An enormous wind blade skimmed and flew over Dimitar who had lowered his posture to the extreme. Hokon who had tried to fire the needle of light from a shooting arrow pose undid that stance with a click of his tongue, and stuck both his hands forward instead.

Immediately after, it made a great “katsun” sound, and the wind blade which Valeria had released was smashed up. A wall of invisible power had repulsed her magic.

Hokon, who had stepped back slightly and withstood the impact, attacked Dimitar in a flash.

「Was it you who did those unnecessary things—」

「I'm just doing my job. ...I think the one who did unnecessary things is you」

「Shut up, boy!」

Hokon drew the sword on his waist and attacked Dimitar.

「...Nu!」

Unable to stop the force of Dimitar's blow, Hokon staggered slightly. As expected, the differences in age and specialised skill might have been shown plainly then. Thereupon, perhaps Hokon had realised that it was foolish to cross swords directly; he stuck out his left hand while jumping to the rear.

「Avoid it!」

Seeing thin lines of light running on the gauntlet's surface, Valeria shouted.

「I don't have the time to be bothered with you...!」

A mass of flame flew from the hand of Hokon who had spat out hatefully. In any case, this being the place, there was no lack of things to burn. In an instant, the fire spread to the books on the bookshelves, and the surroundings grew bright. It was a terrible misfortune for Earl Boske.

「Even if you don't have that intention, we've a need for your neck」

「Ku—」

Dimitar who had stepped to the front of Hokon's chest in one breath unleashed an extreme upper swing blow. The body of Hokon who had stopped that with "Iron Wall (*Furigana: Rampart*)" was blown off just a little comically and went through the ceiling.

「Don't let him go down」

「Huh?」

「Although their numbers are few, his subordinates are below. If we poorly let them link up and escape, everything will be for nothing. ... Isolate Hokon only as it is and finish this」

「But he can use various magics to that degree—」

「I don't really understand, but it may be a device that's similar to this Jagieruka」

Dimitar shouldered the sword that he held in his hand and looked up at the ceiling's hole.

「He supplements his own magic crests that he originally possesses with that gauntlet's magic crests. —It shouldn't be an article that can be made in the rural areas around there but...we can only capture

him and make him confess the truth of it!」

「T, that's true. —Anyway, unless we settle this!」

Dimitar restrained Valeria who had stepped on the wind with new determination and tried to pursue Hokon.

「Are you an idiot?」

「Ha!?」

「If you pursue him too directly, you may receive an ambush」

Dimitar carried Valeria under his arm and crossed the study while going round the flames gradually. He jumped out through the window, kicked the balcony's handrail and leapt up.

「...Just like I thought」

When Hokon went up onto the roof, he stood ready at the edge of the large hole that he had opened. He probably thought of making a surprise attack when Valeria came running after him.

「—Oi, this way」

「!?」

Dimitar casually threw Valeria into the night sky. The eyes of Hokon who was surprised and had turned around wandered between the girl and boy again.

「I said this way, didn't I」

It was clear that Hokon's awareness was drawn in by Dimitar's provocative words. Facing Dimitar who had raised Jagieruka and ran, Hokon spread both his hands and adopted a posture to shoot an arrow of light. Although they hadn't arranged beforehand, concerning the result, it was an effective combination of Valeria and Dimitar.

「Normally, it's not that way, right...!」

As she complained seemingly irritated, Valeria rearranged her posture in the empty sky and drew two magic squares simultaneously with the magic crests on both her hands.

「！」

When Hokon's right hand separated from the invisible bowstring, three arrows of light flew towards Dimitar at once.



At almost the same time, Valeria's "Tornado" caught Hokon.

「Gaa...!」

The two wind blades cut through the air and ran, hitting both of Hokon's arms. Although the damage wasn't to the extent where his arms were severed, at least with this, he might not be able to move both his hands freely anymore. His right hand especially, seemed to have injured its elbow's tendon and blood vessel. A great deal of blood overflowed and began to dye the gauntlet which Hokon had worn red in the twinkling of an eye.

「Richternach-kyou!?」

While ensuring that she could shoot a subsequent "Tornado" at any time, Valeria looked at Dimitar with a sidelong glance.

「...There's no problem」

Dimitar who was walking slowly stared at Jagieruka's blade fixedly.

「It can even erased the magic crests that were carved onto such a thing? It's an extremely convenient tool. It looks like Chief Engineer will cry in surprise」

Dimitar tapped the excellently smooth blade with his finger and gazed at Hokon.

「...I'd like you to teach me of its origin in detail」

「D, don't joke with me—」

Hokon strongly held down onto his right elbow and glared at the pair. However, his complexion wasn't as clear as the shine in those eyes.

「I've always dream of the day when I'll make a comeback to the motherland again...! In such a place, for a boy and girl to—」

「Give it up already, Hokon! You didn't have the chance to win

from the beginning!」

「What's this girl who was caught by me once saying...!」

「To not have gotten rid of us easily at that time is probably the cause of your defeat」

Dimitar cut off Hokon's words of resentment and smiled coldly.

「...Or do you give nothing but such excuses even if you fail in military operations? In that case, it couldn't be helped even if you were ousted from the country」

「Nu...!」

「A, anyway!」

Feeling that Dimitar seemed to be taking charge of this situation again, Valeria raised her voice a little. If she didn't settle at least the conclusion herself, then she really didn't save her face as a Dominas.

「There're various things that I want to ask you, so I'll have you come with us. First, inform the rebel army of an immediate ceasefire —」

「...Wait, Your Eminence」

「Eh?」

Dimitar suddenly pulled Valeria who tried to step forward again towards Hokon towards himself.

The next instant, the roof at Hokon's feet fluttered up sparks and collapsed.

「!」

It seemed that the flames had spread faster than expected in the mansion while Valeria was fighting. Speaking of which, the surrounding's temperature had become much higher than a while

ago, and when looking down at the garden, there were also figures of soldiers escaping from the mansion.

「Oi!」

Hokon just managed to hold onto a beam and avoided falling. However, it wasn't clear how long the middle-aged man whose both arms were wounded could endure. The study directly below was already filled in flames, and he'd hardly survive if he fell down.

Dimitar approached to the very limit and stretched his hand towards Hokon.

「It feels unpleasant that the prisoner dies. Grab on quickly. —Those injuries too, if we don't stop the bleeding immediately, they will become irrecoverable, you know?」

「P, prisoner...you say?」

Hokon looked up at Dimitar and twisted his mouth hatefully.

「I'm yet, to be, caught...!」

「That's enough of your sophism, middle-aged man」

「I won't receive the disgrace of a captive—If I'm to be disgraced, then once is enough...!」

「Oi!?」

Perhaps Dimitar felt unrest at those words, he bent forward and seemed to be about to catch hold of Hokon, but Hokon had separated his hand slightly earlier.

「...!」

Thanks to Dimitar standing up to obstruct her field of vision, Valeria didn't witness that moment, but she clearly understood that Hokon had personally chosen death.

When she was in a daze before that reality, Dimitar covered her head with something.

「Hey—?」

「It's still early to be in a daze」

「Eh—?」

Covering her from the head was her tabard that should have been taken away by Hokon.

「W, where was this?」

「The study from just now」

「.....」

While feeling a little ashamed at herself who completely didn't noticed it, Valeria took off the mantle and put on the tabard. Although she felt that its hem was short a little when she saw it for the first time—even now, a portion of her thighs were visible with her kneecaps exposed—as expected, she felt her body becoming tense when she wore this.

「Oi, didn't I say it's early to be in a daze? Don't grin」

「I, I'm not grinning!」

She glared at Dimitar who had poured cold water on her transient joy.

「We're going to stop the battle, right! I fully understand that!」

「Then I'll be speeding up」

「Hya!」

Dimitar carried Valeria under his arm and jumped down to the garden.

「—Hokon has died in battle!」

Dimitar crossed the space between the soldiers who were desperately trying to put out the fire while shouting so.

「Hokon has died! The rebellion is a failure!」

「W, what did he say...!?」

「Confirm it with your eyes if you can't believe it! He was burnt to death in the vicinity of the study!」

Dimitar threw behind such words and jumped over the wall. He promptly jumped onto the roof of a private house, chose the shortest distance and headed to the front line.

「Nee! Is Lucius-sama all right, I wonder!?」

「He doesn't have the baggage that is you, and is much more agile than me. He can run away as much as he likes. ...He's stronger than me, you know?」

Dimitar glanced at Valeria who was carried under his arm with a “jirori” and sighed.

「Leaving that aside, think about what to do with the soldiers. Unless you can make them believe that Hokon has died, the battle won't end. ...Now that it has come to this, it's a pain that we couldn't capture Hokon alive. —Oi, Your Eminence, what do we do?」

「Since their headquarters was burnt greatly to that state, afterwards is maa—isn't it fine if I face down their opposition somehow with my dignity?」

「...Are you saying that seriously?」

「Yes. —In fact, Dominas must be able to do something like that, right?」

Valeria replied confidently to Dimitar who seemed doubtful.

「...I'll do it and show it to you」

「It's impressive that you can talk big to that extent when you're being carried under the arm by people and moving」

「That's enough, so hurry up! You're being pointlessly talkative, Richternach-kyou!」

「...Fun」

Dimitar's speed became fast, and they steadily approached the rampart that separated the two towns and friends and foes. Under the illumination of the sparsely burning watch fires, several tens of soldiers were seen coming and going on the rampart.

「...To be specific, what'll we do?」

「Basically, you just have to protect me!」

「Hai hai. ...I'll prepare the stage a bit, so wait a little while」

「Hahi!?」

When Dimitar suddenly threw Valeria up high into the sky, he accelerated further and jumped onto the rampart in one breath.

If opposite from this place was the mayor's side, then here was the rebel army's side. But in reality, the present condition was that the rebel army was attempting to rush into the old town's side where the town hall existed with this old rampart as the base. The stationing troops built a barricade right on the other side of the rampart and were defending well, but against the rebel army that was shooting arrows endlessly from above the rampart, they seemed to be forced to retreat gradually.

Therefore, Dimitar naturally appeared right in the midst of the enemies.

「!? You're—」

「First of all, you're a hindrance!」

Dimitar knocked down the soldiers who had wrapped red cloths around their arms one after another.

There, clad in wind and waving her tabard, Valeria descended. Although she staggered just a little, because she was thrown all of a sudden and she did that on the spur of the moment, it might still be preferable that she didn't just fall unsightly.

「It's the Dominas!」

「The Dominas is here!」

「Capture her—!」

「...Your attitudes are big, you all!」

Dimitar obstructed the soldiers, who had recovered from their surprise and came attacking Valeria, and kicked them around.

「Oi, Your Eminence. Give these guys a blow that'll make them have no choice but to be quiet!」

「Leave it to me, Richternach-kyou!」

Clearing her throat with a “kohon”, Valeria let both her hands fluttered in the night wind. Circulating magic power into the magic crests, she took more time than usual and drew complex magic squares. During that time, Dimitar defended against the arrows that came flying and the soldiers who came charging.

「Step back!」

Together with the pompous words that she never use, Valeria stuck both her hands out.

「Hokon had already realised his defeat and committed suicide! All of you discard your weapons at once and surrender too! Otherwise—」

A stream of violent wind gushed out from Valeria's two overlapping hands.

「Uoah!?」

「U, pu—u!」

Fanned by the strong wind, the soldiers were blown off and fell over, falling from the top of the rampart one after another. Although it didn't have the sharpness to cut their bodies, they might not be able to remain on the spot if they were swallowed up by it. Half-hearted arrows would no longer reach Valeria.

Without change, Valeria turned them towards the surroundings in a fan shape with a “guru~u!” and fired them. Due to that, most of the soldiers were brushed off from above the rampart of the vicinity. Incidentally, the nearby private houses' roofs were torn off and blown away. It had turned into a terrible state.

However, it seemed that the rebel army's fighting spirit could be temporarily weakened for the time being.

「Look at that proper~ly!」

Valeria placed her left hand on her waist and pointed to the south with her right hand. As there was hardly any illumination of the town, Earl Boske's villa could be properly seen to be burning brilliantly even from here.

「Your headquarters has fallen already! Hokon has also committed suicide! Do you understand!? The rebellion has failed! Since reinforcement from Roma will arrive tomorrow, you've no chance of winning no matter what you do!」

「S, shut up!」

Weak voices came up from below the rampart.

「General Hokon won't give up on victory so easily—」

「You're noisy!」

Dimitar who was squatting beside Valeria and avoiding the wind until then, crushed the voices of refutation with his usual rudeness.

「If you think that Hokon is still alive, then this isn't the time to be fighting at such a place, right? Return to your headquarters quickly and put out the fire before he turns into cinders! ...But then again, only his burnt corpse will be found there!」

「In, in any case!」

In order not to let Dimitar seize the initiative, Valeria raised her voice further.

「If you still don't surrender even with this, I'll thoroughly burn you with a flame storm this time! You understand what kind of thing, this Dominas me, Valeria Costacurta's power is a little now, right—it's all right if you discard your weapons obediently and surrender, otherwise, I won't be merciful! There's no need to wait for the reinforcement, I'll dispose the entire rebel army myself!」

「—」

There weren't disturbing voices this time. Although the soldiers' expressions couldn't be confirmed one-by-one, it was clear that unrest was spreading out among them. It was a hard to deny fact that their headquarters was blazing up flashily. Moreover, the sense of anxiety that they had no chance of winning if Hokon's death was true might have shaken the rebel army's soldiers.

「Oi」

Dimitar who had stood up spoke close to Valeria's ear.

「—In times like these, it's the carrot and stick approach. Since most of these guys were instigated and thus participated, now that Hokon has died, use cajolery like not charging them with crimes in particular or something and give them a push again」

「U, un」

Valeria nodded slightly and opened her mouth again.

「—Now that the ringleader, Hokon, has already died, if the citizens remaining here can cast away your ill feelings and live peacefully, I can personally make a request to His Majesty the King not to look into the crimes of the people who had participated in the rebellion in particular—that's why, all of you discard your weapons quickly!」

At Valeria's words, a new quiet commotion spread out. There might be people who felt doubtful whether they'd be really acquitted despite participating in the rebel army. Moreover, the stationing troops' soldiers who were behind Valeria, the side that had fought desperately up to here, surely wouldn't be satisfied that the rebels was let off without any blame.

「A, and there's one more thing!」

Valeria instantly thought of a good pretext and pointed at the sky.

「—In regards to the citizens of this town that was deeply damaged by this time's rebellion, in the three years from now, I'll exempt you from the obligation of paying taxes! Since you don't have to pay taxes, please work steadily and reconstruct the town! I'll also negotiate this with His Majesty and definitely have it implemented! I'll stake this name of Valeria Costacurta!」

「Valeria-sama banzai!」

The ones who shouted so were the soldiers defending the barricade in the old town areas.

And thus, it immediately spread into a big wave.

「Dominas-sama banzai!」

「Valeria-sama banzai!」

The soldiers threw their helmets and hats that they were wearing up into the night sky and raised voices of joy. It weren't just the soldiers of the stationing troops, but also the soldiers who had participated in the rebel army; they had discarded their weapons before one knew and were giving praises to Valeria.

When Valeria responded to the soldiers' voices and was lavishing an amiable smile, Dimitar whispered.

「It's great that you stopped the battle but...are you all right? I don't think the exemption of taxes in the three years from now is a matter you can decide of your own accord」

「W...y, you said it, right? The carrot and stick approach!」

「I didn't tell you to give a big sweet like that」

Although he refuted so, Dimitar smiled. Valeria who had started to inflate her cheeks also floated a smile immediately and waved her hand to the surrounding soldiers again.

In any case, the battle had ended.

Valeria Costacurta defeated the rebellion's ringleader and subdued the revolt—as the first job of the new Dominas, it was an outstanding result.

Epilogue - The Boy's Neck

The current remaining royal families of the 7 countries of the “**Holy Alliance (Furigana: Riga Santourear)**” were all descendants of the magic warriors who had helped Redountra and assisted to seal “**Demon (Furigana: Maroudo)**” in the mythical age. In that sense, these seven royal families could be called the oldest family lineages even in the continent.

In Amaddo, needless to say, the royal family, which was the Fortia House, was equivalent to that. However, the one said to have an ancient and honourable origin after the royal family was the **Richternach House**.

It was known that the Richternach House produced a great number of excellent and talented people. In reality, the present head of the family, Orvieta, served as the Royal Magic Academy’s Head Director, and her only son, Lucius, acted as the Seal Chivalric Order’s Vice-Leader.



But on the other hand, in terms of family lineage, they weren’t blessed with descendants. At the present, the person of the Richternach House, besides Orvieto and Lucius, was the child of Orvieto’s cousin, **Dimitar**, only.

At dawn, after ascertaining that the rebel army had disarmed completely, Valeria and party left Seriba. The plump mayor, Puyol, had desperately kept Valeria back, but she turned him down firmly and left. In the first place, thinking that he had the free time to warmly receive Valeria despite becoming busy with the postwar treatment hereafter, one might say that the mayor had a tendency to be dreaming as expected and gave the impression that he was being

lax in some respects. Perhaps he might have thought that Commanding Officer Mazzali would do those sort of things for him.

「Still, isn't it all right even if we return after resting for a day at least?」

Bettina, who didn't have to run back, got onto the one-horse carriage that the mayor had prepared and incessantly complained of her reluctance.

「—Even though I got out of capital with much difficulties, I didn't eat any delicious things desuu」

「You're noisy. In regard to that, everyone is the same」

Dimitar, who had straddled a horse and went to the front, looked back at Bettina over his shoulder and spoke bitterly. The sun that was still in the low eastern sky stretched the shadows of the men and horses long and narrow.

「But...even Valeria-sama feels that way, right?」

「I'm fine with it if I can return safely」

Valeria, who was sitting side-by-side with Bettina on the coachman pedestal, stared at her hands and sighed. Once she had returned to Roma and finished her report, she must get her magic crests (*Furigana: Hierateika*) restored to their original conditions even if it was a day earlier. Although she felt depressed when she thought whether she'd endure that pain again, she was now made to realise the importance of magic crests during this time's mission. Even if one was a Dominas or something, nothing could be done if there were no magic crests.

「Valeria-jou」

Lucius brought his horse close to the carriage and called out to Valeria.

「—I also intend to personally tell His Majesty the matter of Seriba's tax exemption measure」

「T, thank you, Lucius-sama♡」

「Not at all, Seriba is originally a land that has many southern people who favour Bigerou. Therefore, it was a mistake to not have implement some sort of harmonious policies until now」

The look of regret on the countenance of Lucius who had quietly turned his eyes downwards was deep. In the end, he didn't find any clue related to the Bigerou's spy until that mansion burnt down. It was probably due to that that Lucius was dejected.

「...Maa, just being able to swiftly suppress the rebellion this time is good. Valeria-jou's first job also ended in a huge success」

「I'm grateful to Lucius-sama for everything...」

「Not at all, please don't worry. —After all is said and done, Thial and I supposedly haven't gone to Seriba」

Lucius, who had winked softly and smiled, changed his expression suddenly,

「...We'll return to the capital a step ahead, but please look after Dii」

「Ah, haa...」

「Because Dii...is burdened with a painful past, he tends to drive himself to the wall one way or another. At any rate, I think he's difficult to deal with, but his true nature is a good guy」

「A painful past...?」

Lucius stared at Dimitar's back once, bent himself forward and whispered into the ear of Valeria who had instinctively asked a question in return.

「—There was a time when Dii was almost killed by his biological

mother」

「Kill...eh!?」

「Until now, the reason wasn't known, but his mother attempted a forced double suicide when he had yet to turn five..., and though Dii was saved somehow, his mother had set the mansion on fire and lost her life as it was」

「—」



Valeria looked at Dimitar in silence.

She recalled the face of Dimitar when he had said that he was a worthless person who had nothing but flaws. Perhaps that might have been a remark based on his past where he was nearly killed by his biological mother.

「—Well then, Valeria-jou, we shall take our leave here」

「Ah, hai」

Lucius and Thial bowed to Valeria and made their bridles resound.

「Dii! I'll leave the rest to you!」

「Yeah」

Dimitar slightly waved his hand to Lucius's party, who had nimbly galloped their horses and overtaken him, and looked back at Valeria. He slowly decreased the horse's pace and matched Valeria's carriage.

「...What did you and Lucius talk about?」

「Are (*A-re*)? Are you interested?」

Valeria concealed the matter of her heart beating noisily and floated a smile. She thought it was better to not tell the matter of her knowing Dimitar's past to the person himself. Although Dimitar had made her feel irritated in various ways, as one would expect, she felt that she mustn't step in there insensitively.

「—Leaving that aside, I want to ask something a bit」

「What's it?」

「How do I write the report on things like this?」

「Don't ask me who isn't a Dominas」

「Isn't that much fine!」

「There're people in the same class as you, right? Ask them if you don't know」

「But there're many various things that have to be kept secret this time! There're things that I can't tell my friends and parent, right?」

「I'm surprised that you've the concept of duty of confidentiality」

「Isn't that a matter of course? Maa, it also doesn't hurt my heart at all to bother you, and even you'll be troubled if I don't carry out my work properly, right?」

「...Be that as it may, I've to help you even in desk work?」

Dimitar snorted with a “fun” and kicked the horse's abdomen. The horse which had neighed softly accelerated in one go and left the carriage behind in the twinkling of an eye.

「Ah! Just a minute, Dimitar-saan!」

Bettina hurriedly made the bridles resound.

Valeria skilfully moved to the carriage's luggage carrier while giggling.

「—Wake me up when we arrive at the next town, okay?」

「Eh!? Valeria-sama, you're going to sleep!? That's unfair desuyou!」

「It isn't unfair. Didn't you sleep the whole time until yesterday evening? During that time, I was restoring my magic crests and enduring the pain without sleeping, you know?」

「Ugugugu...」

「And with that being the case, good night~」

Valeria, who had pushed aside the luggage, created space, spread out the mantle and lied down on it, rubbed her eyes with a “kushu kushu” and looked up at the sky. As she had saw nothing but starry

skies and the skies during sunset these days, the cloudless blue sky felt strangely fresh.

「Valeria-sama, if I want to pee in the middle of the way, I'll wake you up!」

「Fuai」

Valeria replied with a yawn mixed in and closed her eyes.

Valeria had the self-confidence that she wouldn't be woken up so easily even if Bettina shouted or her body was shaken along the way.

あとがき。

はじめまして、検縫を担当
させていただきまへー、ミュキルニアひす。
初めてだらけでいたオレ、キャラデガも
すんなりとも、身じてござきました。
これも嬉野先生のすきび巻きさん
お詫びみかやじす。
すりかとうじさしまへー!
またお見かけの際は
どうぞよろしく…。

おはよう



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